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DEMOCRATIC VISTAS, 1991
A Statement for the Democratic Left

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INTELLECTUALS AND RELIGION

Recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, among both professors and students, and amid inquisitive people generally, there is an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This interest is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious reawakening entail having any truck with Jimmy Swaggart's weird motel bills or Tammy Bakker's real-life impersonations of Imelda Marcos, or embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or America First. Nor does the religious renaissance imply a retreat from working for peace and justice. Rather, there is an awareness that, in the words of Jean Bethke Elshtain, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political commitments which are far more solid than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and the dangers of pseudo-scientific messianisms.

The New York Times Magazine article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this "return to religion," and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual fascination with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments which result in progressive social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Simone Weil, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary riches offered by such greats as Ignazio Silone, Graham Greene, Thomas Merton, W.H. Auden, Flannery O'Connor, and T.S. Eliot.

An ecumenical and literary monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively" and by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky." And there's no denying the *Library Journal*'s verdict that we will "doubtless command increasing attention."

Those who write for us — Robert N. Bellah, J.M. Cameron, Eileen Egan, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Robert Coles, Christopher Lasch, Norman Lear, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and heart. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. If you're keen on intellectual ferment and the life of the mind and spirit, subscribe today!

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Mark Levinson

THE RECESSION THAT PROVOKED NO RESPONSE

As I write (in July) the administration has proclaimed that the recession is over. One should view such a pronouncement with caution. It's noteworthy, however, that the administration expects no more than a weak recovery, with a growth rate of 2 percent to 3 percent in the first year—significantly less than the 6.5 percent growth in the first year of the average post–World War II recovery. In the most optimistic scenario, unemployment is expected to remain close to 7 percent for at least a year. So even if the recession *is* over, it won't feel that way.

Those in search of the administration's domestic economic strategy need only consult the Council of Economic Advisors' *Economic Report to the President*. There one will find an elaborate rationale for why nothing should be done. Complacency is called for because, in contrast to past recessions, this one has not been accompanied by excessive inventory buildup in the manufacturing sector or serious inflationary pressures. The stock market is buoyant, oil prices are falling, a competitive dollar favors U.S. exports, and the Federal Reserve abandoned tight money (for a few months) in an effort to fight the recession.

In addition, the 1990 budget agreement, which surpasses Gramm-Rudman in its stupidity, has made it difficult to enact an antirecession spending program. The agreement establishes separate spending caps for domestic nonentitlement programs, defense and foreign affairs and specifies that from 1991 to 1993 funds cannot be moved from defense to domestic programs. The budget agreement not only puts a straitjacket on fiscal policy but also assures that there can be no peace dividend until fiscal year 1994. Any increases in domestic nonentitlement programs in fiscal years 1992 and 1993 must be "paid for" with reductions in other domestic nonentitlement areas. One of the staunchest defenders of this nonsense is the Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Dan Rostenkowski.

The three previous recessions were, to some measure, deliberately provoked. Typically, after a period of prosperity and growing labor militancy, inflation would start to rise. Establishment figures would begin to call for a downturn (we must, they say, wring inflation out of the system). The Fed would oblige by pushing interest rates higher, cooling off inflation, the economy and labor.

The 1990–91 downturn did not fit the typical pattern. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has been at a loss to explain the causes of this recession. Testifying before Congress, Greenspan said: "More than any other time that I can recall, this economy is driven by confidence rather than physical forces."

That the economy merely lacks "confidence" is surely a comforting theory. Not since Gerald Ford's daring anti-inflation program—the distribution of Whip Inflation Now (WIN) buttons—have we seen such imaginative economic theorizing.

A falloff in demand is what led the U.S. economy into recession. If consumers—who account for two-thirds of total demand in the economy—aren't spending, maybe, just maybe, it reflects something other than a problem of "confidence." Behind weak demand lie the real problems in the economy: two decades of declining wages and growing inequality, the gutting of the welfare state, and Reagan's new federalism, which is causing state and local governments to implement austerity budgets at a time when the government should be stimulating the economy.

The Flawed Recovery of the 1980s

After 1982, spurred by a militaristic Keynesianism, the United States experienced an eight-year economic recovery. Despite the recovery, there were signs of trouble. Poverty rates generally rise during

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recessions and fall during recoveries, but the recovery of the 1980s had little effect on poverty. In 1989 12.8 percent of Americans—31.5 million people—fell below the poverty line. This poverty rate was significantly higher than it had been a decade earlier, even though the unemployment rate was similar in both years and both years represented comparable points in economic recoveries—years immediately preceding recessions. The poverty rate was also substantially higher in 1989 than it had been in 1974, just before the recession of the mid-1970s.

The lack of progress in reducing poverty during the 1980s was accompanied by a second disturbing trend: widening income disparities. For example, from 1979 to 1989 the average income of the poorest fifth of families fell six percent, after adjustment for inflation, while the average income of families in the middle of the income spectrum remained about the same, rising a very modest 2.8 percent.

By contrast, the average income of the wealthiest fifth of families rose 16.7 percent—or more than $13,000—over the ten-year period. The average income of the wealthiest five percent of families jumped 23.4 percent. The share of the national family income going to the broad middle class—the three-fifths of all families in the middle of the income spectrum—was lower in 1989 than in any year since the Census Bureau began collecting these data in 1947. Similarly, the share going to the poorest fifth of families was as low as or lower than in any year since 1954. The share of national income going to the wealthiest fifth, however—as well as the share going to the richest five percent of families—was the highest ever recorded.

Compounding this problem has been the stagnation of wages. Adjusting for inflation, wages fell more than 9 percent in the 1980s. Hourly benefits, such as pension and health insurance, fell by 13.8 percent. The erosion of real wages and benefits has been uneven. It has been greater among blue-collar and service workers than white-collar workers, greater among younger than older workers, greater among those with less than a college education than the college educated, and greater among men than women.

With wages stagnant, families have been forced to cut their standard of living or have maintained living standards by working longer hours, putting more family members into the workforce, or going into debt. Even before the recession household debt was at an all-time high. The recession limits the possibilities for overtime and second jobs. Unable to work longer hours, employ additional family members, or go into further debt, most American households were forced to reduce spending.

The Shredding of the Safety Net

Another factor prolonging this recession is that unemployment insurance—which is supposed to cushion the effects of unemployment on workers—has been devastated. The UI system is also intended to aid local economies; unemployment benefits help sustain the level of income—and hence the demand for goods—in areas hit hard by unemployment. As a result of cuts in the program, unemployment insurance is replacing workers' lost income only half to two-thirds as well as it did in past recessions.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has illustrated the decline of the UI system by comparing unemployment insurance protection in 1979 and 1989. Both of these were years immediately preceding a recession.

- In 1979 some 42 percent of the unemployed received UI benefits in an average month; in 1989, the figure was 33 percent.
- If the percentage of the unemployed receiving benefits had been the same in 1989 as in 1979, about 600,000 more unemployed workers would have received benefits in an average month in 1989.

Although the unemployment insurance system is the most important form of assistance for workers who lose their jobs in a recession, other parts of the safety net have also been cut sharply in the last decade (these figures also come from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities):

- In 1990 a single-parent family of three with wages equal to 75 percent of the poverty line could qualify for AFDC benefits in only nine states. In 1980, such a family could qualify for benefits in forty-two states.
- Those families who do qualify for benefits will receive much less aid than in the past. In the typical state, maximum AFDC benefits for a three-person family fell 39 percent from 1970 to 1990, after adjustment for inflation. From 1980 to 1990, these benefits fell 18 percent in real value.

Not only do government programs provide less cash assistance than in the past to cushion the blow of unemployment, they also provide less help for jobless workers seeking training or placement into new jobs. From fiscal year 1981 to fiscal year 1991 federal funds for employment and training programs fell by more than half after adjusting for inflation.

Finally, how has this affected poor families? In 1979, 19 percent of poor families with children were lifted out of poverty by government cash assistance. In 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, only 10.5 percent of such families were

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lifted from poverty by cash assistance. (One wonders what the conservative sages who have written so eloquently about the limits of social policy would say about this. Can anyone believe it was an unintended consequence of Reaganite policy?)

Reagan's New Federalism

One of Reagan's most significant reforms, the consequences of which are only now becoming clear, was to reduce aid to states and cities while shifting to them responsibility for many programs—particularly housing, education, mass transportation, infrastructure and aid to the poor. According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, federal spending for key urban programs fell by 72 percent between 1979 and 1989.

Reagan's innovation was not that he favored decentralization. Conservatives since Hoover have strongly favored decentralization. Nixon and Ford, for example, while supporting many Great Society programs, thought the federal government's role was to extend aid to state and local efforts. Nixon's federalism, while rejecting the centralized welfare state of Kennedy and Johnson, advocated a decentralized welfare state, but only marginally diminished and still federally sustained. The principal innovation of Nixon's federalism was general revenue sharing. Other forms of less restrictive federal aid were also favored, and by the end of the 1970s about a quarter of all federal aid was conveyed by broad-based grants.

Reagan, in contrast, was outspoken in his opposition to general revenue sharing and wanted to end all federal aid. Most of the cuts in his fiscal 1982 budget were borne by programs administered by state and local governments.

Unlike the federal government, state and local governments are required to balance their budgets. As the economy declines they are forced to raise taxes or cut spending and employment. States and municipalities will cut spending by tens of billions of dollars in the fiscal year beginning July 1. According to the Congressional Budget Office, this could send unemployment up one percentage point nationwide and much more in New York, California, and New England, where fiscal problems are most severe.

Another consequence of Reagan's federalism is that state and local taxes are paying for an increasing share of public services. In 1981 36 percent of public services were paid for by state and local taxes; in 1990 they paid for 42 percent. In 1990 state and local taxes could have been reduced by $63 billion if the federal government paid for the same share of services it did in 1981.

This shift in tax burden has made the overall tax system more regressive. A recent report by Citizens for Tax Justice, *A Far Cry From Fair*, documents that after taking into account federal offsets, not one state has a progressive tax system—that is, one in which the share of income paid in taxes rises as income rises. In fact in the vast majority of states, both poor and middle-income families are taxed at rates well in excess of the rate at which the very rich are taxed.

Where Are The Democrats?

What is most remarkable about this recession is that for the first time since World War II the federal government is not attempting to stimulate the economy out of a recession. In fact, government policy actually made the recession worse. The Bush administration's ineptitude is surpassed only by the Democrats' failure to focus public attention on the administration's performance and to propose alternatives.

One expects conservatives to represent the interests of the well off. In the nearly two decades that Republicans have controlled the presidency they have served their constituents well. What deserves serious criticism is the utter failure of liberals to so much as mount a challenge. Has there ever been a time when conservatism so dominated the national domestic agenda?

Where are the liberals calling for a revitalized public sector, a jobs program, a blueprint to

SYLVIA **by Nicole Hollander**

the chief economists at two Chicago banks said that the recession probably ended in April or May.
I miss everything.
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Nicole Hollander

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revitalize American industries, a plan to bring America's trade policies in line with international realities, a repair of the safety net, national health insurance, and a return to progressive taxation so we can equitably pay for what needs to be done?

If the natural constituency of liberalism is the bottom two-thirds of society, when will liberals adopt a program—one far more radical on economic issues then anything they have embraced so far—that will attract their own constituency? □

Mitchell Cohen

THE NEW WORLD FLUX

There are two oddities to George Bush's "New World Order": (1) he didn't create it and (2) it doesn't exist. There is a new flux, but not a new order in the world. Its sources, all of which preceded the Gulf War, are the drama in Moscow, the collapse of the Eastern bloc, German unification, and the 1992 integration process in Europe. It is Bush's luck, but hardly his doing, that these—or some of their climactic moments—occurred during his presidency.

The politics of Eastern Europe's liberation were played out in the Kremlin and East European capitals while Washington watched. This was not a bad thing. Anything except a policy of American laissez-faire vis à vis Eastern Europe might have triggered unfortunate responses in Moscow. But to claim that Bush (and Reagan) "undid communism" is to ignore or to refuse to understand Soviet decline in the Brezhnev years and to ignore that America's right-wing governors championed swollen defense expenditures on the basis of eternal struggle with a relentless Titan—who turns out to be a *Titanic*.

It is precisely Soviet weakness that our conservatives, wedded to crude models of totalitarianism, didn't—couldn't—grasp. Similarly, they cannot fathom that the festering malaise of America's Old Domestic Order doesn't dissipate with victory in the Gulf. Moreover, Desert Storm postponed a reckoning: the coordinates of post–World War II American foreign policy were communism and anticommunism, and they have been dissolved.

Washington's response to the internal transformation of the USSR—incantation of standard economic dogma—has been singularly unimaginative. Yet a new world order depends, first and foremost, on what happens in the Soviet Union. It is not only a matter of transition from a communist to a noncommunist regime but of how Soviet political culture—whose authoritarianism has deep roots in Russian history—reinvents itself. It is also a question of geopolitics. Tocqueville suggested that our century would find Russians and Americans facing each other on the world stage; he knew nothing of cold wars.

Washington is now the planet's premier military power. This has led some blinkered pundits to speak of a "unipolar" world. Yet we live in, and are interlocked with, an interdependent economic world. In the past, this country has been either isolationist or dominant in international politics, going from one extreme, before World War II, to the other, afterward. Either extreme "maximizes America's ability to decide its fate alone," as Charles William Maynes noted last year in *Foreign Policy*. In an increasingly interdependent world, neither extreme is a viable option, and to pursue either would be perilous.

The American left will have to reckon with these changes too. At least two legacies need to be addressed. The first is the refusal within part of the left to recognize that international relations have autonomous dimensions, that all is not simply reducible to imperialism versus anti-imperialism or capitalism versus socialism. This refusal was captured by Trotsky when, on becoming the first Bolshevik foreign minister, he declared that he needed only to issue some revolutionary proclamations and close shop. He presumed world socialism to be on the morrow, which would resolve all issues of world politics. A residue of such thinking remains within those who are unable—disdain—to address seriously the less momentous but persistent problems of contemporary international affairs, like governing the interaction of states.

The second legacy is noninterventionism, which should be firmly and intelligently maintained, for it

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is well-founded on unhappy experience with Washington's imperial misadventures, from Vietnam to Central America. However, when noninterventionism drifts into isolationism, when it becomes a left-wing "America Firstism," it no longer represents a serious politics. After all, unless fighting Hitler was a mistake, one cannot say that every use of American power is a priori wrong. Since there is not now, and will not be, a unipolar world economy, isolationism is simply untenable. Besides, should the left speak the language of isolationism or should it propose that imaginative multilateral support for Soviet change and a new world view for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would be excellent starting points for a new world order?

There is an alternative to left-wing "America Firstism"—what I will call "engaged noninterventionism." It requires a balancing act. It assumes that America is in the world but ought not to behave as if it owns—or should own—the world; it presumes that the United States should work with other states toward a community of nations and refrain from the use of force, though recognizing that sometimes, unfortunately, circumstances arise in which it may be unavoidable.

Calibrated engagement, measured noninterventionism. It is not an easy formulation, especially for a weak left in a country run by men with a record of global bluster. It requires left criticisms of Washington to be sharply focused. When Bush boasted that the Gulf War disposed of the "Vietnam syndrome," some leftists abetted him, declaring "No Vietnams in the Mideast"; they allowed him to conflate dissimilar circumstances. Within the antiwar left, proponents of reasoned alternatives to the use of force were sometimes drowned out by voices insisting that Saddam Hussein could do nothing that wasn't George Bush's fault.

Why not blame Bush for what he does do? Such voices damage the credibility of the left and also impede serious criticism of an administration whose sins are legion, beginning with its pre-August 2, 1990 Gulf policy, which yielded only bad and worse options after Baghdad's aggression.

Bush (like Reagan) honors himself for communism's fall; he acclaims himself for victory in the Gulf. Yet he (like Reagan) misunderstood both the USSR and Saddam. This administration is adept at international crisis management—after misconceiving pre-crisis policy and all the while having no coherent domestic agenda at all. Which makes a good reason for nervousness in times of transition.□

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Donna Binder/IMPACT VISUALS

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Erazim Kohák

PRAGUE: A MIX OF HOPE AND TROUBLE

Prague is lovely in springtime when a cloudburst clears the air and sun lights up the bright green slopes above the river and the pastel facades of the Old Town. The narrow streets fill with folk; there is music in the air. Barely eighteen months after the all-powerful State withered away, the long-depressed, threadbare city has come vibrantly alive. In the declining years of the old regime, dissident intellectuals, then working as stokers and window washers, earnestly debated the virtues of a "third way," a vaguely visualized strategy for the postcommunist future that would break out of the stifling shabbiness of ideological totality without succumbing to the one-dimensional consumerism of the West. Today that talk is all but forgotten. When prominent visitors, above suspicion of communist leanings and so free to speak, such as John Paul II, recall it, they provoke an awkward silence. The erstwhile dissidents, now occupying high offices, have been thoroughly coopted by affluence. Their talk now is of the "historic triumph of liberalism," a local code name for the Gospel According to Reagan and Thatcher. Nothing less than the first way will do.

Superficially, the results are impressive. Restitution and privatization are working wonders. Under anonymous state ownership, Prague had been like an unwanted child. The old houses, the streets, and the stores, unowned and unloved, grew ever more shabby, the shelves ever more dusty, the uncaring clerks ever more surly. Under the law of restitution, the long-ago owners are reclaiming the stores they once cherished, lovingly restoring the old façades, as if to make up to them for years of abuse and neglect. Others, new owners who purchased orphaned properties at privatization auctions, are transforming them with capital from abroad. The investment climate is excellent. It is the Gilded Age. The elegant new stores offer a wide selection of crystal, jewelry, furs, and the latest computer technology to no less elegant young, upwardly mobile professionals who think nothing of spending 82,000 crowns for the latest status symbol, a laptop computer. The West has come to Central Europe.

A clanging streetcar ride away, a worn, aging woman, a heavy shopping bag in each hand, trudges from store to store in a vain search for a household broom. There are no brooms. Last week it was vinegar. There is a rumor that the drugstore next to Bílá labuť has brooms, but that is an hour away by bus and streetcar, at four crowns a ride, and by then the stores will be either closed or out of milk or bread. Defeated, she searches the shelves of a self-service grocery. In the past year, prices have doubled and the selection of domestic goods has grown thinner. The gaps have been filled with luxury imported items—fine Italian pasta and German detergents in bright boxes. Those cost four to six times as much as their domestic equivalents. With a weekly food budget of perhaps four hundred crowns she cannot afford the lovely Dutch tomatoes at fifty-two crowns a kilo or a pound of Italian spaghetti for twenty-eight crowns. For her, the store that sells 82,000-crown computers belongs to a world as distant as the America whose extended part it in fact is. The West has come to Central Europe; yet fewer than 10 percent of Czechs and Slovaks live there.

Are the computer stores the new Potemkin villages, much as the model collective farms had been under the old regime? Not at all. It is simply the third-world effect. The massive influx of Western capital encouraged by the slanted exchange rate—tourist dollars, investments, loans—is not revitalizing the domestic economy any more than it did in Guatemala or the Dominican Republic. It is simply creating a new affluent economy, financed from the West and superimposed on a domestic economy without affecting it significantly. The elegant young, upwardly mobile professionals who

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buy laptop computers and drive Western cars are not the apex of the domestic economy. Theirs is an affluence of a wholly different magnitude. A very affluent Czech might earn as much as ten thousand crowns a month, thrice the national average. But a night at the Hotel Intercontinental, inhabited by German industrialists and American evangelists, comes to 7,500 crowns. That is a self-contained world where prices are quoted in dollars and D-marks, financed by foreign capital—and largely absorbing the influx. It is a phenomenon all too familiar from the Third World. In a third-world economy, foreign capital, if left to its own devices, does not invigorate the economy but superimposes a self-contained affluent economy upon it. When a former "second world" country abandons the search for a third way, the impact of the First World has the effect of nudging it into the Third World.

For Central Europe, restitution, privatization, and an opening to Western capital are essential. Soviet communism devastated the region economically, ecologically and socially. Even its communist rulers acknowledged as much when, two years ago, they literally ran away from power. Central Europe had to open itself to the first world. However, it will take a conscious effort if that opening is not to produce the third-world effect. It can be done, as the example of Costa Rica demonstrates. Nor need the effort be much more radical than F.D.R.'s New Deal. Its centerpiece would be a progressive income tax, designed to siphon off excess profits and to reinvest them at the base of the domestic economy in the form of infrastructural and social programs instead of waiting in vain for the new affluence to trickle down. It takes an activist government, vigorously pursuing a course between Reaganism and Bolshevism, to prevent the third-world effect.

The new Czechoslovakian government, run largely by former dissidents turned young upwardly mobile professionals, shows little inclination to do so. President Havel, a man of noble spirit and still the country's greatest asset, spends much of his time abroad, where he can expect applause and admiration; not at home, where he faces problems and discontent. Nor do local politicians show any more inclination to deal with basic problems. The governments and the parliaments of the two constituent republics—Czech and Slovak—devote the bulk of their energies to petty ethnic squabbles, to mutual accusations of past misdeeds, and to countercultural happenings like the recent desecration of a monument to Soviet military casualties of the Second World War. Totalitarian regimes do not foster moral maturity, and the new Czech and Slovak leadership—with a few honorable exceptions like President Havel or the federal EPA director Vavroušek—shows little enough of it.

The conspicuous lack of initiative from above is matched by a lack of pressure from below. Among the intellectuals, that is not surprising. For the most part, their dissident connections have enabled them to latch on, at least minimally, to the new world of Western-financed affluence. But the pressure is no less absent from further below. As the domestic economy comes under greater strain with the collapse of the traditional Soviet market for Czechoslovak exports, there is a growing sense of disillusion, discontent, and distress. Public opinion polls have noted a marked shift of popular opinion from the center to the right. The discontent, though, has not taken the form of pressure for an active government role.

The operative factors are memories. They are simply too recent. We seldom speak of them, even to each other. We have thoroughly eliminated all visible marks of the enforced enthusiasm: the red stars, the slogans, the statues of Lenin, the street names. Yet memories remain of the arrogant ideological incompetence, of the petty tyranny of Communist party ward heelers, of the endless frustration. Whatever the strains of the present situation, except among the former party activists, there is a deep-rooted, bitter determination: never again! However little we may like it, we are not willing to question the policy lest we revert to what we have just survived. There is something of a paralysis of frustration in the air, but there is one great compensation: the daily miracle of life without fear. The person in the street may grumble, and with reason, but he or she is not willing to risk a reversion to the old regime. For forty-two years we have lived "planned" lives. Now it seems safer just to let things happen and call it "market economy."

The trouble is that things don't just happen. When a society turns over the management of its affairs to Adam Smith's invisible hand, it is entrusting itself not to an abstractly rational pursuit of private weal but to the blind working of the attitudes, habits, and thought patterns ingrained in its political culture. In Margaret Thatcher's Britain, that culture included a tradition of democracy, a sense of fair play, and a respect for diversity. The political culture of the post-communist Central Europe is quite different—and rather less favorable.

A distinctive feature of that culture is a deeply ingrained historical determinism. Consciously, we have rejected Marxism and all its works. Yet our discourse suggests that few of us conceive of the

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future as a field of options calling for a range of complex valuations and choices. As a whole, Central Europeans tend to leave valuation and choice to History, unconsciously assuming that the latest is thereby also the best, "vindicated by History." The minority's choice, just by virtue of being chosen by a minority, appears suspect, as "set aside by History." As for anything that is no longer fashionable, be it Kantian ethics or rail transport, our discourse tends to describe it as "surpassed by History." The counterpart of those peculiar locutions is a tendency not to choose but to inquire what History has chosen—what is "advanced," "progressive," or just plain "modern"—and to strive mightily to keep up with History, forswearing what it has surpassed, eschewing what it set aside, embracing what it has vindicated. It is the bandwagon effect with a theoretical justification.

The effect is visible in the aesthetics of our daily life. Prague is a city obsessed with fashion and devoid of taste. It is more painful in philosophy. We tend not to ask what is good, what is true, what is just, only what is the latest. In social policy, it is disastrous. Programs are considered not on merit but on historical correctness. An electoral victory tends to appear not as the voters' choice—which may be wrong and might be reversed—but as the Verdict of History, which it would be reactionary, if not downright immoral, to question. Ironically, in our new freedom we tend to make an anonymous History as much of an arbiter as the Communist party ever dreamed of being.

In the Czech popular consciousness—less so in the Slovak—History's most memorable and authoritative pronouncement has been what is described as "The Historic Triumph of Liberalism over Socialism." The crumbling of the Soviet empire appears as nothing less than the Verdict of History, vindicating the Great Liberator, Ronald Reagan, and all his policies as History's choice. His critics have been set aside. Socialism—a term that includes rather indiscriminately F.D.R.'s progressive taxation, Stalin's collectivization, and Mitterrand's economic planning—has been surpassed, once and for all. History has condemned any attempt to interfere with the free play of the market. Liberalism—understood as vintage Reaganomics with a dash of Thatcher—has been vindicated. To question it is certainly folly, perhaps knavery.

This grotesque yet deep-rooted conviction, impervious to all evidence, is another aspect of our communist heritage. Many Americans, prone to underestimating the power of their example and to overestimating the effect of their preaching, tend to blame the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. Yet is was the Soviet and our own communist propaganda that for years presented the cold war as the epochal confrontation of two definitive and incompatible contenders for the future.

Given that perception of the cold war, it is not surprising that to most Czechs the crumbling of Soviet power did appear as the Verdict of History, vindicating Ronald Reagan's brand of "liberalism" against all critics. Here facts are irrelevant. Carter's human rights initiative and grain embargo go unnoted. America's burgeoning indebtedness and the savings and loan crisis become evidence that the Great Liberator spared no expense to restore our freedom. Soviet propaganda failed to capture the heart of Central Europe, but it succeeded in shaping its perceptions.

It is damnably difficult to break free of such perceptions. For years, the left—communist and democratic alike—had insisted that it is not only public opinion but History itself that was going its way, until even the right began to believe it. Now the shoe is on the other foot. It is the right that is buoyed by a sense of riding the crest of History—and the left suspects that it may be so. Since the communists remain the major force on the Czechoslovak left, most democratic leftists are content to have it be so. We would not want to risk having the communists return to power. It seems safer to let History have her way—and that does not make for an effective opposition.

The opposition in Czechoslovakia, such as it is, has also to contend with a third aspect of the Marxist-Leninist heritage, the overtly rejected yet ingrained suspicion that dissent is really treason. Since we now have democracy, it is not currently punishable by law, but it still feels somehow disloyal to disagree.

That again is a perception that affects the rulers and the dissenters alike. European opposition parties have seldom regarded themselves as Anglo-Saxon style loyal opposition, dialectical partners of the ruling party, sharing with it the responsibility for the common good. As the tradition of rule here tends to be authoritarian, so the opposition tends to be "revolutionary," standing aside or obstructing the work of governing and waiting for the government to fail so that it can take its turn at ruling.

The Leninist perception of politics as warfare powerfully reinforced that perception. Though our current laws guarantee a right to dissent, our instincts remain binary. We understand identity of views as friendship, disagreement as hostility. We have yet to rediscover what Masaryk taught: the possibility of an agreement to differ in mutual respect.

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Nowhere is this lack of tolerance for diversity more evident than in the militant nationalism now paralyzing major portions of the former Soviet empire. In a time of transformation, an intensification of ethnic awareness is quite expectable and can have a positive effect. The community of ethnic kin, sharing memories, attitudes, and language, serves as an instant in-group, reassuring amid fragmenting certainties. America went through such a period of ethnic resurgence after the Vietnam War. For the most part, it produced a celebration of ethnicity-at-large, everyone becoming Irish on St. Patrick's Day and Italian on Columbus Day. In Central Europe, the rediscovery of our rich and diverse cultural heritage as Moravians or as Slovaks or as south Bohemians could be enriching after years of drab uniformity.

The effect is rather different when the discovery of diversity fuses with a perception of diversity as a threat. Then ethnic awareness easily turns from celebration to a deeply destructive nationalism. Pressing problems go unsolved while all energy focuses on redressing perceived slights to national pride. Demagogues have a field day.

The resurgence of Slovak nationalism, to be sure, is a far more complex phenomenon than a simple fusion of ethnic awareness with the Leninist conception of diversity as warfare. There is the whole scale of slights and grievances typical of a smaller group's self-perception. The parallel between Québec and Slovakia is striking. Some of those grievances are imaginary, many are all too real. While Czechoslovakia contributed mightily to the Slovak resurgence in our century, the Czechs have been overbearing and insensitive partners. Unfortunately, there are also people far more interested in exploiting grievances than in redressing them. Nationalist rhetoric has invoked the wartime Slovak state, which prided itself on having more stringent anti-Semitic laws than Nazi Germany, its sponsor and ally. In great part, it has been financed by the Canada-based Slovak World Congress headed by prominent former officers of the Slovak version of Hitler's SS, the Hlinka Guards. Unsavory though it may be, the nationalist rhetoric is perceived by most Slovaks as articulating legitimate grievances and discontent. It may not resolve them, but it vents the unease, offers a scapegoat, and so is perceived as legitimate.

The phenomenon of Slovak nationalism is as distressing to thoughtful Slovaks as German nationalism has been to cultured Germans. It requires a separate analysis. Yet for all its complexity it illustrates the crucial point: when divergence comes to be perceived as warfare, solutions become impossible. The crucial question for Czechoslovakia today is whether its people can overcome the conviction that History, not humans, is the arbiter of right and wrong; the conviction that History has vindicated Reagan's and Thatcher's "liberalism"; and the conviction that dissent from History is treason. If they can, they might yet find their way. If not, they are more likely to slide into a third-world status with a privileged stratum appropriating and reexporting Western capital while their faltering economy sputters on and they themselves work off their discontent in ethnic conflicts.

Václav Havel is a man of moral vision, still widely respected—though in Slovakia his popularity has sunk inversely to the rise of nationalism. Of late, after having been roughed up by Slovak skinheads on a visit to Bratislava, he has been more of a presence abroad than at home. Yet were he to present his vision of a humane, democratic Czechoslovakia actively to the people, as he did in the election campaign a year ago, he could go far toward changing the situation.

Another straw of hope—more than a straw—is the flowering of life away from the world of the mass media. We may speak of crises, but there is joy in just living day by day. There is much initiative. It is not affluence trickling down. It is freedom springing up. After years of suspended animation, the vast majority of Czechs simply want to get on with the business of living.

Yet without systematic support, such individual efforts, however laudable, can be no more than Band-Aids on a cancer patient. The grounds for hope need to be structural also, and, as a recent visitor, the American philosopher Richard Rorty, aptly observed, they are likely to be ironic. Adam Smith's invisible hand is not likely to provide the needed vision; nor is social democracy, smeared with the red brush. The one issue capable of challenging the Verdict of History may well prove to be ecology.

Environmental damage may seem an unlikely issue for the left, traditionally responsive to bread-and-butter issues. The "liberals" for their part embrace ecology about as enthusiastically as Ed Meese once did. The official line is that ecology must wait until we can afford it, after we have built more factories and encouraged more pollution.

Yet the issue will not go away. The environmental devastation wrought by mindless expansion is obvious. In the winter, Prague lives in toxic smog. In several northern cities, children can go out only wearing respirators. Our forests are dying, our rivers contaminated. Slowly, the message is sinking in: the

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devastation of the environment is the obverse of the affluence we admire. The hallmark of the third world is private affluence amid public squalor. What we are facing is a variation upon that theme: selective human affluence amid natural squalor.

That is a powerful argument. We love our land intensely. Are we willing to sacrifice it? We may be fascinated with the affluence of the West and awed by invocations of the Verdict of History, but are we willing to sacrifice our land?

It *is* ironic. After the fiasco of the planned economy, most Czechs are prepared to give free rein to the Market. Even F.D.R.-style New Dealism appears as the road to serfdom: Hayek is an unchallenged best-seller. All the traditional arguments for restraint upon the robber barons, appealing to the ideas of social justice, fall upon deaf ears. Yet we are ready to heed the cry of the land, the beloved land.

It is too early to tell whether any political force will prove capable of using ecology as an effective call to save us from sliding into the Third World. The left and the right alike have long concurred that humankind's goal is ever-increasing individual consumption, differing only as to the best means for achieving it. Ecology challenges that goal. For the first time in generations, it questions the assumption that insatiable greed is the highest human need. It presents us with a higher need: the need to restrain our greed so we may go on living with a clean conscience in a peaceful land, a living, healthy land at peace. It is the one call that can save Central Europe from slipping into the Third World in its mindless imitation of the First World.

Václav Havel once said that there are times when it is necessary to do what is good without calculating the odds. In Czechoslovakia, this is one of those times. □

Anson Rabinbach

GERMAN INTELLECTUALS AND THE GULF WAR

Nowhere in Europe did the Gulf War provoke so explosive a public debate as in unified Germany. It was not Germany's reluctance to contribute military forces to the coalition (deployment of troops outside of NATO territory is prohibited by the Basic Law) that accounts for the vehemence of the controversy. It was the virtual consensus that surrounded the official stance, combined with massive and spontaneous nationwide peace demonstrations characterized by anti-American rhetoric and an indifference to the fate of Israel. The result was a bitter confrontation between left-wing intellectuals for whom Germany's obligation to Israel was a singular moral imperative and a resurgent peace movement for whom any German complicity in war and militarism remained the most powerful postwar prohibition.

When the war began there was not the slightest doubt anywhere on the political spectrum, from the ecological-fundamentalist wing of the Greens to the higher echelons of the CDU (Christian Democrats), that Germany should opt out of the conflict militarily and play a subordinate role financially. Critics abroad pointed out that the government's reluctance did not extend to preventing German firms from delivering weapons to Iraq even after the UN embargo or German engineers from improving Iraqi missile accuracy systems and advising the military research center in Mosul. Only after the first Scud missile attacks on Tel Aviv did Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher arrive in Jerusalem with the promise of cash and Patriots. Genscherism, some critics said, stood not for patient and intelligent diplomacy, but for international "malingering."

The Gulf debate was striking for the fact that many of Germany's best known left-wing intellectuals, like Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Wolf Biermann, Jürgen Habermas, and Peter Schneider, along with prominent veterans of the 1968 generation, among them Jews like Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Micha Brumlik, supported the war and publicly criticized the peace movement. This confrontation between partisans of "no more war" and partisans of "no more fascism" turned on home-grown historical

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analogies. Was Saddam Hussein the authentic "heir" of Adolf Hitler, as Enzensberger claimed? Was the attack on Kuwait the replay of the bloodless Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia? Was the "coercive disarmament" of Iraq the correct lesson to be drawn from the appeasement of the late 1930s, or was militant pacifism Germany's contribution to a world faced with nuclear or ecological catastrophe on the order of a global Auschwitz? These questions posed a choice between the two most traumatic memories in postwar Germany, placing at odds the imperative not to repeat the political quiescence that made possible the Nazi dictatorship and the Jewish genocide on the one hand, and the military expansionism that led to Germany's defeat and destruction on the other. That both were products of the same disastrous history made the choice all the more difficult.

There were antiwar demonstrations throughout Europe and the United States. But the German protests quickly assumed the character of a nationwide "children's crusade" of high-school-age protesters, profoundly apocalyptic in mood, and dominated by anti-U.S. rhetoric. The German peace movement greeted the war with a negative euphoria recalling the massive marches against the stationing of U.S. missiles in the early 1980s, combined with the sense of imminent catastrophe that accompanied the Chernobyl disaster. Shortly after the bombing began, one speaker typically called for a unilateral end to hostilities by the United States and its allies in order to "prevent the even greater climactic catastrophe which threatens to implicate the entire world."

A decade ago many observers saw in the German antimissile campaign the specter of a neutralist, pacifist, and, above all, anti-Western Germany unhinged from the NATO alliance. At that time the reassertion of Germany's "special path" in European history was confined to the Green party and the "extraparliamentary" margins of society. But the outbreak of "peace nationalism" in 1991 was for many intellectuals proof that unification had relocated all of Germany's political parties in the peace camp. The peace movement turned out to be the government's alter ego. President Richard Von Weizsäcker reminded those abroad who only a few months earlier had been wringing their hands over resurgent German power that they could not now be upset over Germany's constitutional limits on military action. After all, he said, "the victorious powers" had demanded that article, and rightly so, since peace was "a special German responsibility afforded us by our experience." Similarly, Willy Brandt shrugged off the English-language press, "Germany can't be everyone's darling." And Rudolf Augstein, influential editor of *Der Spiegel*, charged that it was hypocrisy to demand a military role from Germans since "that is precisely what was thoroughly driven out of them in the forty-five postwar years."

In Dresden I encountered a demonstration only a few feet from a hydrocephalic Lenin monument and a short walk from the ruins of the Anglo-American bombardment of February 1945. One placard read: "Oh Lord, Throw Down Some Brains from Heaven." There is something both moving and yet unnerving about the very young invoking and perhaps exclusively identifying with the (German) victims of bombing. Perhaps it is inevitable, as a friend remarked, that after forty years of having been told of their grandparents' guilt as well as their suffering, the children of today's Germany could do little else than demonstrate for peace. Would I prefer Germans applauding the destruction of Baghdad? Yet, the overanxious equation of war with nuclear or even planetary suicide and the repetitive invocation of the emotion-laden word "stricken" (*betroffen*) bespoke a claim to moral superiority—as if, as was often asserted, Germans were endowed with a higher level of moral self-reflection.

The renascent peace movement seemed also to bring about a reconciliation between the former East German protest movements of November 1989 and their West German Green and antimissile counterparts. With the wall gone, a show of unity against the U.S.-sponsored war could wipe away the West German movement's embarrassing history of omission and indifference toward Eastern European and GDR (East German) protests against Soviet hegemony. Former East German protest leaders like Gottfried Forck, the Evangelical Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg, were prominent in the antiwar movement. Forck, the main speaker at a giant peace rally in Bonn on January 26, demanded an end to U.S. bombing "precisely because we are confronted with a crazy dictator willing to draw everything into the strudel of annihilation," adding, "If I do not reflect on this fact I am myself responsible for all of humanity that can perish in this catastrophe." Some of the banners that spontaneously appeared after January 17 displayed unabashed enthusiasm for this belated reunification on the left. "We Are a People" became "We Are a People Against the War," and "Germany United" became "Germany United Against the War."

Almost from the outset a few peace movement supporters, for example, Petra Kelly and Till

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Bastian, disavowed any anti-Israel sentiment, but there was a highly visible element that blamed Israel for the Iraqi attacks. This reached tragicomic proportions with a Green party visit to Israel on February 19. On the day the Green delegation arrived, Hans-Christian Ströbele, official party spokesman, declared in an interview in the *Jerusalem Post* (conducted by Henryk Broder, an outspoken critic of the peace movement's attitude toward Israel) that "the Iraqi missile attacks are the logical, almost compelling consequence of Israeli policies" and that Israel was at fault because of its past treatment of the Palestinians and the Arab states, including Iraq. The ensuing scandal, which provoked protestations of "partisanship for Saddam Hussein" and "horror" among more responsible Greens (like Joschka Fischer, former environmental minister of Hessen), sent the delegation packing and forced Ströbele's resignation. Earlier, at an emotional Party Congress in Frankfurt, Micha Brumlik resigned from the Greens after a vote opposing the sale of Patriots to Israel (it was then reversed). Typical of the hyperbole the Ströbele episode produced was Broder's assertion that "at work in considerable part of the peace movement was the strong desire for Saddam Hussein to seize the historical opportunity and finish the job that the Nazis couldn't complete." But the peace movement's insistence that the Gulf War was the first assault of a triumphant U.S. "New World Order" against a demonized third-world nation repeats a longstanding modus operandi of identification with the Arab "victims of the victims."

The peace movement's revival provoked a surprising response from German intellectuals, who broke ranks with the neutralist majority. The Gulf War debate—despite important differences in tone and argument—was the first to occur in a post–cold war atmosphere and did not fit into a predictable left-right script. The left-wing *Tageszeitung (TAZ)*, for example, did not take an antiwar position, leading at one point to a "human chain" of protesters between the offices of the right-wing Springer press (*Bild Zeitung*) and the *TAZ* to dramatize the latter's sellout to "really existing neoliberalism." The Gulf War debate may have signaled the breakup of the most politically cohesive left-wing culture in Europe.

The unexpected stance of Wolf Biermann, the singer/poet and former enfant terrible of the German Democratic Republic, exemplifies this new situation. The Gulf War was a parting of the ways with his former friends in the peace movement:

> Like you, I drive a car, heat with oil, eat well, and hurtle along into the ecological catastrophe. One foot pushes the gas pedal, the other the brake. But these days I chew on slogans at the demos in Germany and want to throw up big. Dear pacifistically inclined reader, dear peace movement reader, let us from the very beginning not misunderstand each other. I am for this war in the Gulf. You don't need to read on. I hope that this war completely and thoroughly destroys the weapons arsenal bought from West and East to annihilate Israel.

Appeals to "peace without when or if" suggested to Biermann not only the Munich appeasement but also the unholy alliance of right and left in 1938–39 when communists and fascists joined together to sanction the takeover of Poland and Czechoslovakia. Recalling the old French peace slogan of 1938, "*Mourir pour Danzig?*", Biermann claimed that "this alliance between authentic rightists and false leftists is with us again." Biermann concluded that he was "happy" the United States had acted, even if out of base motives, since "otherwise Israel would have stood alone; Saddam would have liquidated it, if not today, then tomorrow, with a German-French-British atomic bomb."

Drawing a sharp parallel between Saddam Hussein and Hitler, Hans Magnus Enzensberger also argued that the Gulf War could be defended as an anti-fascist undertaking. Like Hitler, Saddam Husseim was bent on "collective suicide"; like Hitler, his mass support fed on the "unlimited love and readiness for sacrifice of his followers"; and like Hitler, he was incapable of calculated self-interest. Saddam Hussein "did not fight against another internal or external opponent—his enemy is the world." It is this will to domination unto doom that makes him today's authentic "successor" of Hitler—"neither a German nor an Arab, but an anthropological fact."

Jürgen Habermas, who in recent years has become Germany's liberal conscience, did not agree that the parallel between Saddam and Hitler "extended as far as Enzensberger's anthropological considerations." Though less than wholehearted in his endorsement, Habermas too declared the allied military action in the Gulf to be "justified" (as opposed to "just"). But Habermas cautioned that the war had to conform to, and, if possible, establish a universal standard for U.N. intervention. The question was to what extent there was sufficient rationale to apply "binding principles of international law and achieve them through conventional methods of war." Only if the United States and its allies did not pursue their own selfish interests, if the war was conducted under the

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umbrella of the UN, and if its aims were limited to the liberation of Kuwait and the destruction of Iraq's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (not the elimination of Saddam Hussein) could it be morally defended. However, at the end of February, Habermas was still skeptical that the conduct of the war "would stand up to such scrupulous investigation. I would be unequivocally decisive on only one point: we should not hesitate in help for Israel."

Habermas attributed the vehemence of the German debate to the government's failure to defend its position. "Instead, we reacted to *faits accomplis*, with draft resistance and checks, with pacifism and arms deliveries, with bad conscience and ambivalent feelings." He was also the first to see the debate as a clash between two distinct emotional responses to Germany's Nazi history: "Almost instinctively, the break with the fascist past expresses itself in two reactions: no more anti-Semitism and injury to the rights of citizens, and no more nationalism and war." For this reason, Habermas still hoped to salvage something from both sides. Even if the war was ultimately justified, the peace movement's antipathy to great power politics and its insistence on the obsolescence of war was valid. A reduced role in the conflict predicated on the "memory of the barbaric war which Germany began" might, he argued, be legitimate if it was coupled with an insistence on Germany's moral responsibility toward Israel.

Karl Heinz Bohrer, the acerbic editor of Germany's prestigious intellectual review *Merkur*, saw the collusion of the governing elite and the peace movement as further evidence that even unified Germans are unwilling to abandon their innocent provincialism for the hazards of a modern nation-state. Even before unification, Bohrer linked his postmodern aesthetics to an Anglo-American *real-politik* in a series of controversial attacks on what he saw as the conservative provincialism of the Christian Democrats and the moralizing cultural politics of the Social Democrats. During the Gulf War, Bohrer—by no means a conventional nationalist—faulted politicians like the Social Democratic leader Oskar Lafontaine for their "stupendous lack of reality," and denounced Chancellor Helmut Kohl for his deficient sense of German "*Staatsraison*."

Germany's "conscience-stricken provincialism" was defended by Peter Glotz, a leading Social Democratic intellectual, who in turn accused prowar writers and journalists like Bohrer, Enzensberger, and the filmmaker Hans Jürgen Syberberg of a new "elite-nationalism." For Glotz the present danger is neither Kohl's "Europeanist" course nor the peace movement but the desire articulated by Bohrer and many others to be free of the "Dresden-Hiroshima Complex"—a threat that comes not from the conservative right but from the liberal center. If Germany and Japan were to abandon their so-called Pax Axis, the ultimate consequence would be that economic power would lead to military power and eventually to the emergence of a militarist German nationalism—with a nuclear capacity. Since Germans in this century "were entwined in two terrible wars," almost "eliminated another—the Jewish—people from the face of the earth," and themselves experienced the "catastrophic consequences of the plague of nationalism," they should, Glotz asserted, be permitted to follow an "antitraditional politics." But this requires a consistent ban on arms exports, no military deployment apart from regional defense, no war financing, a peace corps (for the East), and large-scale investment in economic reconstruction and the ecological stabilization of this endangered world. At least Glotz's prescription had the advantage of not advocating nonparticipation while writing military checks and sanctioning the arms trade.

A juxtaposition of Bohrer's ambiguous irony and Glotz's social democratic pieties goes to the real stakes in the Gulf *querelle*. Did, in an odd twist, the traditional "good" German posture of antimilitarism and nonparticipation in global intervention, secured by the Basic Law, turn into license for hazardous innocence? How can Germans maintain their post-1945 commitment to the democratic West without sacrificing the memory of two world wars? The danger, as Habermas recognized, is that many Germans could easily find solace in a postunification left-wing "normalcy," which (unlike the conservative normalization of renewed military pride) sacrifices principles like national sovereignty and human rights to apocalyptic anxieties. Adopting the habitus of the peace movement, the nation could become hostage to a Green Heideggerism, the morally superior "shepherd of Being" in a world abandoned to military-ecological catastrophe. This is not a simple pacifism but the inverted nationalism of an eternally penitent nation.

Yet it must be admitted that the difficulty, perhaps even the impossibility, of reconciling the imperative to reject war with the imperative to protect Israel made it all too easy for the protagonists on both sides of the debate to jettison a sense of the moral and political uncertainties of the war itself. No matter how compelling the historical analogies, the war did not go according to any of the apocalyptic scenarios. One of the most admirable qualities of the German

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generation of 1968 is that its most articulate spokespersons have learned to tolerate the ambiguities of political choice.

In that spirit, Detlev Claussen reminded both sides that they had "demonstrated conscience and emotion," and that one could "consider the war necessary without being a swine, and reject it without being either immoral or unpolitical." The novelist Peter Schneider warned that only German "self-righteousness" might be the ultimate winner. And Daniel Cohn-Bendit justified the war while condemning the hypocrisy of the intellectuals for ignoring Iraqi suffering as well as the hypocrisy of the peace movement for refusing to admit that sometimes despots cannot be checked by words alone.

In the Blitzkrieg of analogies that the German debate unleashed, one that was forgotten was the analogy of 1918. During the debacle of World War I, many Germans repudiated the imperialist aims of the politicians and embraced a spiritual relationship to politics, which Thomas Mann, in his *Considerations of an Unpolitical Man*, called "in good German fashion, a non-relationship." In the midst of that war, high-minded appeals to a cultural nation were also a protest against the conservative Bismarckian "state without culture," against Western democracy and materialism, against war profiteering and parade-ground nationalism. In 1918, many Germans, exhausted and humiliated by the folly of national self-assertion, eschewed conventional politics and retreated to a "sphere that is undoubtedly superior to the state and to political life" where "all deeper morality belongs."

Coming in the aftermath of the national self-assertion of 1989–90, the Gulf War confronted Germans with a choice between nostalgia for that German "nonrelationship," the "unpolitical man [and woman]," and the sometimes necessary but nonetheless calculating *Staatsraison* of nation-states. If it was once true, as Lafontaine put it, "that driving the Barracks spirit from the Germans was a primordial question of European security," the "constitutional pacifism" that Germany acquired from that exorcism reminds us that nationalism does not always turn up in a military costume. As more than one shrewd observer noticed, the authentic German assumption of the burden of guilt and responsibility after 1945 was often at the expense of a tragic sense of politics in which good and evil cannot be entirely disentangled.

The Gulf debate, the *Historikersteit* of 1986 (see *Dissent*, Spring 1988), and the intense debates over the path to reunification have led Germany's left-wing intellectuals to realize how little value remains in the cliches of the post-1968 left; how little consensus there is—or should be—in an entirely new domestic and geopolitical situation. As Klaus Hartung noted in his reply to Glotz:

> The years 1989 and 1990 left behind a rubblefield of convictions, worldviews, caricatures of the enemy, and paradigms of responsibility. The self-satisfied West German left emerged from the triumph of 1968 and established itself in a world organized by the East-West division. With the collapse of the Soviet Imperium and the rise of the human rights movements, that intelligentsia stepped into a historical showplace where all the concepts—nation, religion, democracy, market—that were previously either taboo or inserted in a rigid left-right schema were not rethought but politically remobilized. This fact has been understood only by a small minority in this country. But this new political intelligentsia has begun to attack the Western European right-left seating order. □

The Winter 1992 issue of ***Dissent*** will be devoted to American labor, with articles by David Brody, Alice Kessler-Harris, David Montgomery, Robert Reich, and Nick Salvatore.

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Sumit Ganguly

TROUBLED INDIA: A DOOMSAYER'S PARADISE

Pessimism about India is nothing new. Right now, there is no dearth of gloomy news from the subcontinent. Not only was former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assassinated in a particularly violent election campaign last spring, but two separatist insurgencies continue to wrack the country. In the northern states of Kashmir and Punjab, ethnic rebellions threaten national cohesion. In Uttar Pradesh, a large, populous state also in the north, a controversy surrounds the Babri Masjid, a mosque that, it is said, stands on the ruins of an ancient Hindu temple. An ardent and growing number of Hindus refer to the area as Ram Janmabhoomi or the birthplace of Lord Rama, one of the principal figures in the Hindu pantheon.

This dispute is emblematic of deeper rifts between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Most pronounced in north India, these divisions are now threatening to spread elsewhere. In fact, ethnic tensions are no longer confined to particular regions as they once were. At a national level, the country is deeply divided over the Mandal Commission Report, a comprehensive "positive discrimination" (affirmative action) plan initially commissioned eleven years ago. In principle, this proposal aimed to improve the lot of the so-called "Other Backward Castes." This produced substantial discontent following its recent resurrection. It would have reserved well over 50 percent of all government jobs for the lower strata of the Hindu caste hierarchy.

Ethnic and religious differences are not the only problems. Following the electoral defeat of the Congress party government of Rajiv Gandhi in 1989, shaky coalitions sought to govern the nation. In order to broaden their narrow electoral bases, a succession of political parties resorted to short-sighted populist measures, ranging from dismissing loans to farmers to attempts at implementing the contested affirmative action plan. In the process more problems—both political as well as economic—were generated. External shocks complicated matters as well. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing war in the Persian Gulf delivered a number of blows to an already shaky economy. The rise of the cost of oil by $1 per barrel drained the Indian exchequer of $235 million in badly needed foreign exchange. The country was also faced with the prospect of repatriating some 180,000 Indian workers from the Gulf, and losing their remittances, which in 1990 alone amounted to $500 million.

All this could not have come at a worse time. Owing to import liberalization policies pursued during much of the last decade, India's trade deficit has significantly widened. These imports, composed largely of capital equipment, will contribute to the long-run modernization of the economy. In the immediate term, however, they have to be financed through costly foreign borrowing. Currently, India's debt service ratio is as high as 27 percent of all export earnings. This figure, likely to worsen as New Delhi seeks additional loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is a source of considerable worry to economic analysts. Some are already sounding the tocsin that India may be sliding into the debt trap in which other oil-poor developing nations, like Brazil, are mired.

These problems have deflected attention from another potentially devastating issue: demography. Despite various governmental attempts at promoting birth control, population growth is hovering around 2 percent per year. India adds around eleven million people to its population every year. This is like adding approximately the entire population of Australia every twelve months. The consequences are ever-expanding demands on scarce resources and a need to feed, house, educate, and employ larger and larger numbers of people.

Faced with this picture, many thoughtful observers express misgivings about the country's long-term political and economic viability. Will India become, to use John Kenneth Galbraith's pithy phrase, a

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"functioning anarchy"? The question is hardly academic. After all, India's fate involves a fifth of humanity. However, to paraphrase Mark Twain, the news of India's impending (or imminent) demise is greatly exaggerated. True, specialists from a variety of disciplines have long expressed doubts—which were surely reinforced by the spring's electoral violence—about the state's viability. In the sixties, a noted American journalist, Selig Harrison, coined the term "fissiparous tendencies" to describe the ethnic and class divisions that were threatening to rend the fabric of India's polity. Such conflicts continue to bedevil the country, yet its national integrity has remained intact. Later in the same decade, Paul Ehrlich, the population biologist, suggested a Malthusian dilemma: the population's growth would steadily outstrip its ability to feed itself. His scenario of disaster did not come to pass. The "green revolution," based on hybrid seeds and increased reliance on farm technology and artificial fertilizers, transformed India from a net importer to a food-surplus nation. Following the first OPEC-induced oil crisis (1973–74), which saw the quadrupling of oil prices, the then president of the World Bank, Robert MacNamara, expressed fears that the Indian economy might collapse within six months. It did not. Instead, India went on to cope effectively with the next oil-price hike in 1979. Foreign analysts have not been the only prognosticators of Indian trauma. A number of Indian social scientists and political commentators have written at length about the country's grave disintegrative propensities. Harold Gould, an American anthropologist who has long worked on India, describes this tendency as the "apperception of doom."

India's political and economic record since Independence in 1947 has undoubtedly been mixed. On the one hand, there are grave economic inequities, continuing sectarian strife, periodic lapses in the protection of human rights, and the increasing venality of elected officials. Nonetheless, Indian democracy is alive and vibrant, even if troubled in the aftermath of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. Any number of post-independence challenges could have tempted the country to authoritarianism. Instead, it has become increasingly democratic as broadening segments of the population have become politically mobilized.

A number of American social scientists, particularly Samuel Huntington, long cautioned that such political participation would strain the limited capacities of a nascent political system. Eventually demands would outstrip governmental capacities, leading to political disorder, according to this theory. Yet the Indian political leadership, albeit in a fitful and ham-handed fashion, did precisely the opposite. It steadily expanded the electorate, although often it was not magnanimity but the exigencies of electoral politics that led politicians to court previously disenfranchised sections. India's untouchables legally have the franchise but they, and occasionally members of other minority groups, particularly Muslims, encounter local intimidation aimed to dissuade them from political participation. Moreover, the national government's professed commitment to political opportunity for all and its use of affirmative action furthered the lot of some members of disadvantaged communities. As increasing numbers of minority groups entered the political arena, they were perceived as potential vote banks. Consequently, political parties could ill afford to ignore them. The net result was a dramatic expansion of the electorate and a modicum of improvement in the socioeconomic conditions of minorities.

This political mobilization came, however, with social and political costs. As previously quiescent groups sought political access to social goods, a backlash from members of hitherto privileged communities followed. The recent controversy surrounding the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi is in many ways symptomatic of a deeper malaise. Gains made by Indian Muslims and Hindu "untouchables" are perceived by segments of the north Indian Hindu community as an erosion of their social dominance. The right-wing Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) blatantly attempts to capitalize on this sentiment. It contends that Hinduism is endangered due to the supine "minoritysism" of the Congress party, with its secular credo. Accordingly, the BJP demands that Hinduism be restored to pride of place. Initially confined to northern merchant communities and central India, the BJP now seeks to make inroads into other parts of the nation. Its ability to widen its political base remains an open question, but it is already a potent national force. Last year, when the Janata Dal (literally "People's party") government of V.P.

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Singh sought to prevent a BJP-organized nationwide march to the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi, the BJP withdrew its parliamentary support for the minority regime, ensuring its collapse.

The BJP's growth has caused considerable concern to Indian intellectuals weaned on Nehru's vision of a secular polity. They are fearful that the specter of Hindu dominance will undo Indian pluralism. And they worry that the exigencies of electoral politics have pushed secular parties, like the Congress, in the direction of the BJP.

There are in fact certain structural limits to the expansion of the BJP's influence. Hinduism is far from a monolithic faith. Its practices and rituals vary widely throughout the subcontinent. There is what anthropologists call the "great tradition" of north Indian Sanscritic Hinduism, but it is often in competition with various "little traditions" that inform local ritual and practice. In the longer run, regional ties to the "little traditions" should prove more binding than an ephemeral attachment to the Sanscritic "great tradition," on which the BJP would build a Hindu monolith. Two other important facts need mentioning. First, the BJP is dominated by upper-caste elements, and it therefore holds little appeal for India's untouchables. Second, Hinduism is only one facet of the ethnic identity of most Indian Hindus. Another crucial dimension is linguistic. Indeed, this aspect of identity is so powerful that India has yet to establish a widely accepted national language (though formally Hindi has that status).

Although there exist long-term impediments to the BJP's ability to expand its electoral base and thereby radically transform the Indian polity, in the short term it is able to exploit Hindu misgivings about the "pampering" of minorities. In last spring's election the BJP emerged as the single largest opposition party in the lower house of the Parliament. BJP inroads into the Congress party's traditional strongholds may convince the latter's leaders to reorient their electoral strategies. This might well result in the Congress reaffirming its traditional credo. Alternatively, it might encourage a continued search for short-term political advantage through partisan appeals to the artifact of Hindu nationalism.

India's tenth general election, held during the months of May and June of this year, was an important gauge of the country's political culture. For the first time voters were offered three distinct alternatives. In all likelihood this presages the growth of a competitive party system and the end of Congress dominance, which has been the essential feature of Indian political life since 1947. Although the Congress party still emerged as the single largest force in Parliament, it fell short of a majority by some twenty seats.

A troubling feature of this election was its violence. It stems, first, from the willingness of a range of politicians to exploit ethnic differences for short-term gains. With the possible exception of the two Communist parties, virtually every political party has made narrow, sectarian appeals to both majority and minority communities. Such moves have fueled simmering tensions, frequently leading to conflagrations. Tragically, the local police and paramilitary forces, who should be neutral guarantors of public order, all too often become infected with the communal virus. In the worst cases they actually become participants in the rioting and mayhem, while in other instances they have proved to be mere ineffectual observers. The second source of political violence is the willingness of many politicians to flout the most rudimentary norms of democratic conduct through voter intimidation, ballot-box tampering and even multiple voting.

Underlying these matters is an important transformation of the Indian polity. Indian politicians can no longer take for granted the political preferences of India's poor and minorities. Adult franchise has become so widespread that local satraps can no longer assume that the poor, illiterate masses will vote "as expected." Politicians desperate to cling to office increasingly resort to sordid practices. Consequently, political mobilization at once expands democracy and poses a significant challenge to it. Still, in the long run, politicians will probably have to abide by democratic norms. The sheer costs of using force to deter voters from exercising their right of franchise are becoming staggering.

The persistence of another democratic institution, a free press, is also raising the price of election malpractices. In this past election the press was replete with stories of "booth capturing." These reports significantly tainted a number of important politicians. More important, they often led the election commissioner to "countermand" the results in particular constituencies, thereby serving notice that violations of balloting standards would not be overlooked.

The Indian press remains a continuing source of the nation's resilience. The eminent economist Amartya Sen contends persuasively that a free press has saved India from many of the horrors that have visited other developing nations, notably, China. The press's willingness to expose governmental incompetence and corruption is one reason India has not suffered large-scale famine since independence. In marked contrast, some more than forty million

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people perished in China following the collapse of agriculture after the Great Leap Forward. Sen's argument is disarmingly simple, since no Indian government could have survived the political costs of mass starvation. Still, it was a free press reporting failures of public policy that ensured this.

The short period of dictatorial rule during the late seventies, when Indira Gandhi declared a "state of emergency" to secure her political fortunes, bears out Sen's claim. Surrounded by sycophants and relying on reportage by a muzzled press, the prime minister lost touch with the electorate. When she did call elections in 1977, after eighteen months of authoritarianism, she was defeated—much to her surprise. Gandhi's failure in 1977 should have laid to rest a popular Western notion that democracy is dependent on a certain threshold of economic development. In contrast, India's large reserves of poor, illiterate peasantry resoundingly demonstrated that they cared about their civil and political rights.

Four decades of holding elections at the national, state, and local levels have embedded democratic norms in India. Despite the multiple crises that the country faced this year, it successfully went through another nationwide ballot. For all its shortcomings, the polling underscored the institutionalization of a democratic political process. When all is said and done, there was a legitimate, if chaotic, transfer of power. This perhaps offers the most compelling grounds for hope that India as a coherent political entity will not only endure but in its own peculiar way tackle the challenges that vex its leaders. □

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Denis MacShane

MAJORISM AND THE RENTIER ECONOMY

Traditionally, the British Tories have been known as the stupid party. At key moments in twentieth-century British history, such as Munich, Suez, and the destruction of manufacturing after 1980, they have taken decisions as a government that beggar belief. However, in light of their election successes in the 1980s, they might seem a very clever party, and their decision to ditch Margaret Thatcher was also clever.

Yet there is mounting evidence that in the years of Tory rule since 1979, they have done their best to turn Britain into a stupid country. Like a powerful candle drawing hordes of moths, Thatcher attracted more intellectuals to her side, more theory-spinners than any other British prime minister. There are more fellows of All Souls in the government than at any previous time in the twentieth century, and they have presided over the worst cuts in British education, training, and skills base we have ever seen.

Britain has fewer in education after age sixteen, fewer in university, fewer with technicians' qualifications, and fewer craftsmen than Germany, France, or Japan. South Korea is producing more Ph.D.s than Britain. The proportion of employees in training in manufacturing has fallen since 1979 to just 1.9 percent. According to Sir Claus Moser, president of the British Association, Britain "is now in danger of becoming one of the least adequately educated of all the advanced nations."

An example of how much Britain has been made into a stupid country can be seen in the number of patent applications each year. The OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) analyzes patent applications per one hundred thousand of population, and it is a good indication of the cleverness of a country:

Austria	118
Denmark	114
Finland	119
Germany	220
Japan	300
Netherlands	116
Sweden	238
Switzerland	417
United Kingdom	111

What is common to all these countries other than Britain is that they have a fully organized, integrated education and vocational training system laid down by law and administered on a consensual bi- or tripartite basis. Tiny Sweden and Switzerland, each of whose populations is smaller than that of London, are producing money-making ideas at more than twice the rate of Britain. It is not only a question of original research. Patent registration also reflects entrepreneurial skills in spotting opportunities in specialized journals or at the laboratory stage.

Even the United States invests twenty times as much venture capital in companies carrying out innovative research and five times as much in high technology companies as does Britain. British venture capitalists spend their funds on mergers and buyouts or in low-technology sectors such as retailing. Under the Conservatives, Britain enhanced its profile as a nation of shopkeepers but increasingly had to buy abroad the goods to sell in shopping malls.

A principal myth of the Thatcher years was that Britain made great strides forward in productivity. Mainly this was due to the massive cuts in employment of the early 1980s. If far fewer people are producing the same, or even slightly smaller, output, then clearly productivity shoots up. Yet a new study published by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research shows that the productivity of manufacturing industry in Britain in the 1980s was just two-thirds that achieved in the Netherlands. Output in Dutch textiles and basic metals is twice the corresponding level in Britain.

On any measure of resources allocated to education and training, the decline has accelerated under the Tories. This is not a haphazard process based on government meanness. What is being applied is a deliberate political strategy linked to the electoral needs of the Tories.

There are two broad choices for governing elites to chose from in contemporary economic development. One can aim for a rentier economy or for a

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productionist economy. In a rentier economy there may still be plenty of manufacturing while in a productionist economy there is a great deal of income (that is, rents) deriving from shares, property, and investments. A productionist capitalist economy offers possibilities for movement toward more pluralist and even social democratic policies, but a rentier economy is untransformable except through abrupt, violent upheavals. It is in rentier economies that we see sustained attempts at violent overthrow of the government, notably in Latin America and the Philippines, while productionist economies such as Korea and Taiwan, although with state repression, are generating political organization, often based on industrial workers, and not armed violence.

Britain, it will be said, has nothing to do with these Third World rentier economies and instead is a mature, if economically problematic, European nation-state. In fact, Britain in the 1980s has suffered from more violence (Ulster, urban ghetto riots, football hooliganism, violent crime, racist attacks, poll tax riots) than any other European country as the Conservatives drive to a rentier economy.

A rentier economy still demands a certain level of education to reproduce its administrative elite, and this is provided by the university system. But the difference between a rentier and productionist economy is to be found in nonuniversity training. As London University's Professor Sig Prais points out, the difference between Britain and Germany is not in the production of university graduates—10 percent of each population were graduates—but at the level of "intermediate" skills. Sixty-four percent of Germans had "intermediate" vocational qualifications compared with 28 percent in Britain, itself a decline from a decade ago. In 1988, according to the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, 62 percent of the British population had no qualifications of any sort, compared with only 26 percent in the then West Germany.

Although Britain has a relatively small administrative elite to be placed at the head of companies, government, and public institutions, it does not have the skills in depth to ensure quality—in products or services—at all levels of output. This reflects a quite deliberate social decision to keep people in ignorance. Ignorant people know their place. As Dickens put it:

Oh let us love our occupations
Bless the squire and his relations
Live upon our daily rations
And always know our proper stations

Hierarchical relationships linked to the values of a landowning aristocracy still dominate in Britain. Despite all the rubbish about Thatcher's attack on the establishment and the rise of Tory meritocracy, egalitarian relations based on teamwork are decreasingly evident in contemporary Britain.

Further evidence of drift toward a rentier economy can be seen in the distribution of firms in Britain between manufacturing (productionist) and trading or extractive (rentier) companies. Manufacturing now occupies about 25 percent of the British economy compared with 30 percent in the 1970s. Only four out of the top ten British firms are in manufacturing. In Germany, Japan, Sweden, and South Korea, the top ten companies in each country are in manufacturing.

Emphasizing rentier instead of productionist values is a medium- and long-term mistake because as a country's manufacturing base decline so does the strength of its rentier sector. Of the world's top fifty banks, Britain has only four compared with twenty-two for Japan and seven for Germany. The Conservatives accept this impoverishment of Britain as part of their policy to create a rentier economy. Productionist economies create a stratum of managers, even owners, whose chief aim is to improve product output in terms of quality as the only secure way of making a profit. Politically, their best allies are often to be found in democratic parties of the left, linked to worker organizations that stress educational and skill opportunities for their members. In Germany, Eduard Reuter, head of the Damiler-Benz vehicle and aerospace conglomerate, is an SPD member, while in France, Alain Gomez, head of the giant Thomson electronics group, is a Socialist party member and former theoretician of the left-wing CERES group.

The team-working consensual approach of the Japanese and the relatively small wage and salary differentials in Sweden and Korea are also marks of a productionist economy. The oft-cited dichotomy between industrial and service economies is, in this context, irrelevant. The Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden all have a higher proportion of the work force in the service sector than Britain, yet all are manufacturing centered with much higher levels of skill training and education. Even in Japan, there is a higher percentage (54.5 percent) of male workers in the service sector than in Britain (36.2 percent). It is thus a matter of political choice, not an unstoppable economic distribution of employment

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that determines whether a country increases the knowledge and skills of its population.

There are other consequences that flow from choosing the rentier, low-skill, hierarchical path as opposed to the productionist, knowledge-developing, egalitarian path. One of them is that in a rentier economy employees have to work much harder. According to British government statistics, British manufacturing workers put in an average of nine hours overtime per week, thus pushing up the working year toward Third World levels. A 1989 study showed British autoworkers working longer hours than the supposed workaholics on auto assembly lines in Japan. Unlike the productionist economies of Sweden and Germany, where overtime is strictly limited by law or under the control of plant works councils, a rentier economy like Britain's prefers excessive overtime and a smaller number of manufacturing jobs.

Also despite newspaper publicity given to some scandalously high pay increases for top bosses, British managers at all levels tend to be at the bottom of the scale in international comparisons of managerial earnings. Productionist economies *have* to pay managers well and should (though often enough don't) pay workers well. In any case, in a productionist economy, the difference between blue-, white-, and bright-collar workers becomes eroded, with all seeking to maximize output, sales, and their share of wealth created. In a rentier economy, managers are paid poorly, because the source of wealth is not earned income but shares, or property. Why not toddle along at half what your German equivalent earns because when Mummy dies and leaves you a five-bedroom detached house bought for U.S. $30,000 in 1975, now worth ten or twenty times that amount, you are going to be in clover.

A manufacturing economy is also about empowerment. To get quality right from the beginning and not have corrections or repairs to worry about further down the production line, workers have to be given the power—and the skills—to solve problems on the spot. To empower workers is to alter the nature of control. It is perfectly feasible to have productionist economies in which control is exercised to thwart workers from using skills and workplace power for broader social reasons—Japan is a good example. But with a deep-rooted political culture of social concern stretching from social to Christian democracy such as exists in Europe, productionist economies bring with them a social agenda extending beyond the workplace. The greening of the labor movement in Northern Europe and the fight for women's rights in the workplace are examples of the social spin-offs of productionist economies linked to a socially aware political culture.

Other symbols of the drift toward a rentier economy in Britain are well known. More and more of manufacturing industry is now owned by foreign capital. American, Japanese, and French companies now own all of the U.K. auto industry save for the British Aerospace subsidiary Rover, and Honda has a 20 percent stake in that company. Fujitsu has bought ICL, thus eradicating the British-owned computer industry, while Canada's Northern Telecom has taken over STC, a principal telecommunications manufacturer in Britain. Foreign ownership is not bad in itself—Ford and Vauxhall (GM) have never been British—but it is a mark of a rentier economy when foreign capital so predominates.

Parts of British manufacturing will benefit from foreign takeover and, if anything, the Japanese have probably saved key U.K.-based manufacturing activities. Nonetheless, part of the skill and information input will be generated in Japan and it will take some years, if not decades, before Japanese companies are ready to demand a wider reskilling of the British work force. Indeed, one of the key reasons that the Japanese are buying into British industry is the hierarchical, obedient-to-superior relations that come with the work force in a rentier economy.

In the days when nationalization of the means of production was the chief goal of Labour, a major argument advanced in its favor was that the owners or managers of the coal mines or steel mills were so stupid that only public ownership could secure efficient management of industry. This may have been to mistake an effect for a cause. British industries were inefficient not because they were privately owned but because the workforce—including the managers—were not well enough trained to run them with innovation and excellence. The problem lay not in a specific form of *ownership* but in the nature of *control* exercised by workers and managers based on insufficient skills and knowledge. The democratization of the workplace or the community is only achievable if workers and citizens have the skills, knowledge, and ability to use information required to make complex, often painful, decisions. Rentier economies ask you to vote once every five years. Productionist economies offer the possibility of greater involvement.

The question, then, of skills, training, and education is important not because of a technocratic desire to improve efficiency. It is profoundly a question of social power and will determine whether Britain continues its change into a full-fledged

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rentier economy or whether it can become a twenty-first century productionist economy.

The only hope for twenty-first century democratic socialism will lie in the realm of democratic productionist economies, and that is why the politics of education, skills, and training is now the foremost item on the agenda of the contemporary left.

The rentier economy forges a coalition of haves, of those who have some wealth stored in property, unit trusts, or shares, against have-nots. Rentier economies do not implode or collapse under the weight of Marxist contradiction. Doomsayers are looking forward to the coming world recession, but rentier economies can drift along for decades under a pro-rentier government.

Education and training for all and constant reskilling are incompatible with a rentier economy. They are also incompatible with John Major's government. The new prime minister is an exemplary product of a rentier economy—someone who left school at sixteen and then moved upward in a bank by attaching himself to a patron, Lord Barber, chairman of the bank where Major worked in the 1970s, and then repeating the exercise in his political career with Margaret Thatcher. His niceness, intelligence, dryness on economic or wetness on social issues are all irrelevant. Britain is producing hundreds of thousands of sixteen-year-olds without the hope of education and training. That one of them becomes prime minister is no excuse to condemn all the others to the vagaries of a rentier economy existence.

A Major government is incapable of moving toward a productionist economy because it would mean breaking faith with what it believes. Despite rhetoric and cosmetic changes, this government will not be able to tackle the education and training problems that now top the political agenda in Britain. □

new left review

NLR 187

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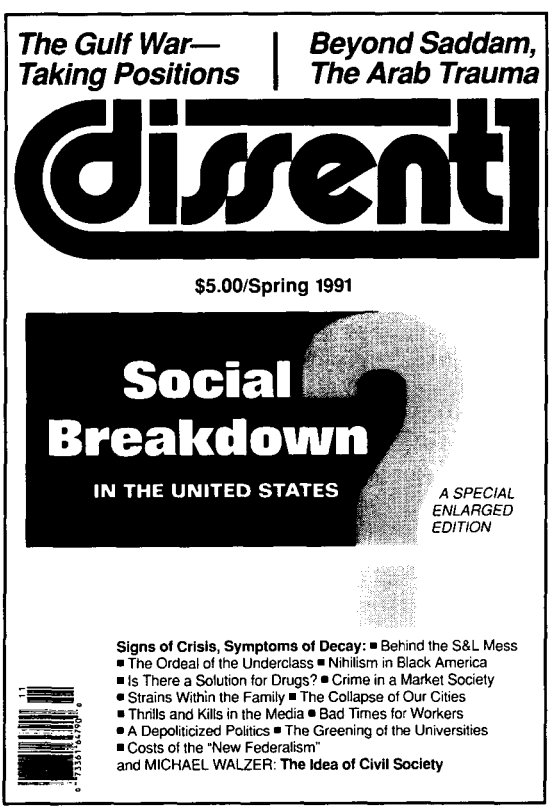
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DEMOCRATIC VISTAS 1991

We speak as Americans of the democratic left. We wish to advance our views regarding the current American situation—without, of course, any pretense to completeness or agreement on every point. Our hope is to stimulate the forces that work for democratic social change.

The great historical event of the past few years has been the collapse of the communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe and the crisis of communism in the Soviet Union. What has come to an end is the last shred of legitimacy for the communist world, which for three quarters of a century usurped and befouled the ideal of socialism. What has also collapsed is the rationale for the cold war and its policy of a balance of terror. The age of totalitarianism is evidently over, and many parts of the world enjoy a democratic resurgence. Whatever the subsequent difficulties, the revolutions of 1989 will remain magnificent achievements.

The revolutions of 1989 were not, in essence, revolutions in behalf of capitalism; they were revolutions in behalf of freedom. But having lived for so long under the dictatorship of the party-state, some East Europeans imagine that unregulated capitalism will have none of the bad effects in their countries that it has had in other countries. And so the immediate successor to communism is not, as we had hoped, social democracy.

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Crash privatization, as in Poland, can bring in its wake social misery. However intensely East Europeans advocate utopian capitalism, the new democracies could discover that their place in the global economy resembles Argentina or Mexico more than Sweden or Germany. With time, however, the appeal of unbridled capitalism is likely to fade, and society's weakest segments will organize to ensure that they are not forced to pay the price for the introduction of "free" markets.

About the Gulf War the signers of this statement have different opinions. Some thought war the only means available to force Iraq to leave Kuwait and reduce its military threat. Others thought sanctions the proper means to accomplish these ends and thought the carnage of war the greater evil. Still we can agree on certain points: that the U.S. tilt toward Iraq before August 2, 1990 only fed Saddam Hussein's dangerous ambitions and paved the road to war; that aggression must be resisted, by peaceful means if possible, by military means if necessary; that having invited popular uprisings in Iraq, President Bush was unconscionably late in shielding the Kurds; that the United Nations should be strengthened so as to promote regional security; that the best American role in the Middle East is to support a general peace settlement and democratic government; and that arms sales should be brought under international control.

This is the background for political life in America. The collapse of communism and the military victory in the Gulf have been greeted with smugness. One might suppose that America's triumph means that our troubles are over—that all we need from the future is more of the past.

But beneath the surface, there is profound uneasiness, a sense of things gone wrong, an atmosphere of alarm and anxiety. Everyone can point to signs of social decline, even social breakdown—poverty, crime, drugs, the breakdown of cities, the savings and loan crisis, the failure to provide decent health insurance for millions of people. The social contract—never adequate, but a major step forward—created by American liberalism, through the New Deal and its successors, said that the federal government has a responsibility to guarantee the accountability of the institutions on which the country depends. Reaganism, a partial counterrevolution, could not quite destroy this social contract, but it severely weakened it, both in terms of legislation and popular thought. Reaganism and its puny offspring in the Bush administration are a major source of the social squalor increasingly afflicting this country.

The United States and much of the rest of the industrial world are burning up the future through careless energy policies. American political culture seems most invigorated only at moments when it can confront an external enemy. Meanwhile, social misery has become normal; indignation is diverted and blocked; protest is scattered and incoherent.

Much of today's social misery is avoidable—it is due, in good part, to economic and political arrangements rigged against, or at best indifferent to, the common good. Beneath the many varieties of social misery is a pattern: the systematic maldistribution of resources and of government expenditures.

Has there ever before been an administration in Washington so openly indifferent to the condition of the country? Even the Reaganites had policies to offer—bad ones, but at least policies. But the Bush administration, from moral cynicism or social ignorance or both, behaves as if all the social ills that are visible in the streets simply do not exist or can be cured through the mysterious ministrations of the market. Neglect is the policy of Bush, indifference the motivating outlook.

A great question must now be posed, and if there were a sufficiently vigorous opposition in Congress and public life, it would be hammering away at this question: If the United States could succeed in transporting half a million soldiers and a vast quantity of war materiel within a few months to engage in the Gulf War, why does our government seem so feeble, so lax (and relaxed) before the task of mobilizing American resources to cope with our growing poverty, the shame of homelessness, the collapse of the cities, the breakdown of the infrastructure, the failures of education, the scandals of racism and sexism? It is sometimes said that these tasks are more difficult than conducting a war thousands of miles from our

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shores. If so, then let us, through renewed common action, call upon greater social, moral, and financial resources. To see the social ills of America as "natural" or beyond remedy by human beings is to acquiesce in the ideology of reaction.

Here, in briefest summary, are a few of the issues—neglected, denied—that our country must confront:

- The government defines poverty at an extremely low level. Even so, some thirty-two million Americans, or 15 percent of the population, according to official statistics, are poor. The homeless are merely poverty's most visible representatives. Forty percent of the poor are children under eighteen, which means that one-fifth of all American children are poor. Nearly twenty million Americans suffer from hunger.

In conservative folklore, poverty is caused by welfare and can be cured by work. Yet a great many of the poor are women with young children. Millions of others cannot find work. Many millions more, not officially counted as poor, are only one illness or marital breakdown away from penury. One in five Americans has no health insurance.

- American society has acquired a shape that, from a democratic perspective, is unjust. The median net worth of the top 1 percent of households is twenty-two times greater than the median net worth of the other 99 percent! If we consider "net financial assets"—a household's net worth minus equity in homes and vehicles—the gap is even wider: the median of the top one percent of households in the United States is 237 times greater than the median of the other 99 percent. That is not what a democratic society should look like.
- Nature degrades faster than regulations arrest the degradation. Atmospheric warming, ozone destruction, toxic dumps, lung-destroying air, poisoned water, carcinogenic food, the reckless plowing under of farmland, energy waste, dependency on fossil fuels—these are American facts. Meanwhile, in the impoverished majority of the world, American companies dump chemicals banned for American use; forests are destroyed and deserts spread, in part because of local corruption and greed, in part because of Western pressure for profits and resources.
- One of the few triumphs in the last two decades has been the rise of the feminist movement. But the gains have been only partial, and some have been lost again. Economic inequality persists, and so do political and social inequality. Women still earn less than men for similar performance; they still have too little access to high level positions, to decision making, to political power. Stereotypical images of gender continue to be projected on TV and in the culture at large. Abortion rights—which benefit men as well as women—have been weakened and are being threatened. On all these fronts, the fight is far from over.
- An especially pernicious heritage of Reaganism has been the systematic weakening of the labor unions, the resort to crude union-busting by corporations, the open anti-union bias of governmental agencies. Whatever our criticisms of some segments of the union leadership, we remain convinced that the labor movement has been and continues to be a major force in the struggle for progressive social measures on the domestic front.
- Victims of violence are to be found disproportionately among racial minorities, the elderly, homosexuals, children, and women beaten by husbands and partners—wherever people are vulnerable. The homicide rate among young men in the United States is far higher—four to seventy-three times—than in other industrial countries. Yet somehow we have become accustomed to seeing this condition as "natural."

Hardly anything has been done about poverty, violence, and crime for years. Programs are announced—"wars" on drugs—but the programs are largely rhetorical. Someone is appointed drug "czar," but the "czar" does little except to advance his public relations. When welfare measures are cut, crime and poverty increase. Meanwhile, the Bush administration proposes to do nothing about poverty except cut still further welfare programs like WIC and AFDC. An already terrible situation grows worse.

Recent frauds on Wall Street and in the savings-and-loans banks represent, in terms of

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dollars, probably the greatest crime wave in American history. At the top of society as at the bottom, less regulation means more crime.

• A generation has passed since the civil rights revolution, which remains a great victory of radical democratic action in America. Yet for too many people race is still destiny. The black middle class has prospered to some degree, but the ghetto decays. Men in Harlem live shorter lives than men in Bangladesh. Black family income in 1987 was only 56 percent of whites'. The median net worth of whites is 11.7 times that of blacks. Two-thirds of black households have zero or negative net financial assets—compared with 30 percent of white households. Race forms an economic tier: whites on top, blacks on the bottom.

While attitudes in some parts of American society become more reactionary and bigoted with regard to race and ethnic differences, the actual racial and ethnic composition of the population is becoming ever more varied. America needs more of a liberal sensibility on these matters, not less. We need to reassert the democratic goal of racial integration.

• During the Reagan years, the United States spent $2.4 trillion dollars financing an overblown military machine. The end of the cold war created an opportunity to apply some of the country's wealth to social reconstruction (and to ease the burdens of transformation in Eastern Europe and the Third World). Yet Congress has only nibbled away at the Pentagon budget, and the Pentagon, in turn, is already exploiting the Gulf War to argue for absurdly inflated Reaganite military budgets. Military research continues to absorb the lion's share of scientific talent and technological investment. The nuclear state-within-a-state goes on despoiling the land, seemingly indifferent to the cold war's end. Faced with continuing trade deficits, the Pentagon—along with other powers—goes on fueling the international arms trade. At home, the infrastructure rots.

• The more severe America's problems become, the less we seem able to discuss them. The "sound bite," the media consultant, the multimillion-dollar television campaign—these dominate political life. Because so much money is required for television campaigns, big capital controls political life to a degree never before known in American history. The result is an abysmal level of political discourse, a systematic avoidance of problems in behalf of fatuous and scurrilous symbolism—as in George Bush's stress in 1988 on the Pledge of Allegiance and the crimes of Willie Horton. We face the decline of coherent political publics (not least of all, that of American liberalism) and a fragmentation of political life that reduces too many citizens to mere spectators.

There is no single cause of, no single solution to, the dangers and problems we face today. We believe, however, that the question of the management and ownership of the economy is fundamental. The current fad for a "free" or unregulated market—a figment of pure ideology—cannot lead to equitable socio-economic solutions. Markets constitute a system for distributing goods and capital, and it is all but meaningless to speak of or evaluate markets apart from the social system and economic structure within which they function. To abolish markets altogether would be foolish, but to let them operate without substantial regulation must surely lead to greater concentration of wealth in fewer hands. By itself the market cannot generate social equality or justice. It cannot generate a feeling of community. It cannot look out for the environment, for the rights of the oppressed, or even, at times, for the long-range interest of its own most enthusiastic champions.

Only social action through government intervention and through the efforts of trade unions and other large groups of mobilized citizens can do these things. But who will propose and initiate democratic social action for substantial reform in a day when the "free market" has become a popular ideology?

It is this perspective that causes us to look with dismay at the recent weakening and floundering of American liberalism within the Democratic party. A strong, assertive liberalism is a prerequisite for the changes that are needed in America, as well as for the renewal of a linked or adjacent democratic left.

This country needs a democratic left—a movement that will speak about the democrati-

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zation of society, that will seek to control business and to stimulate investment and innovation for the general good, that will create a basis for majority electoral coalitions. The social basis for such a left already exists—in the unions and in women's movements, in movements for ecology, for the rights of minorities and immigrants. A desire for such a movement isn't hard to detect, either—among educated young people, for instance, who wish to pursue careers devoted to social progress, egalitarianism, the sharing of privileges.

For a renewed democratic left, intellectual work matters. Some of the worst notions of the last decade—supply-side economics, the supposed failure of Great Society programs, the claimed superiority of right-wing over left-wing dictatorships, the presumed American lag in nuclear arms—emanated from intellectuals and well-placed publicists. Since the late 1960s, neoconservatives have not been bashful about promoting their policies—and perhaps even more important, striking an emotional tone, a sour vision. In an America where many felt threatened by crime, neoconservatives offered rationalizations for social recoil.

By the time the Reagan administration came into office, the neoconservatives had set the terms of debate in the media and policy circles. The right rode high, the left fell back, and even the widespread sense of social crisis did not bring up a vivid debate about national direction. Yet it is by no means clear that even during the depths of the Reagan trance the right could count on a majority of the public. People are perplexed and troubled more than they are unambiguously conservative. Cynicism about politics is the most prevalent mood—a mood that enables retreat and accommodation.

The collapse of communism ought no more to drive intellectuals to the right than the miseries of unbridled capitalism ever justified the embrace of communism in the first place. Rather, for the democratic left, the collapse of communism and the demise of the cold war should be occasions for renewal—for fresh thinking, vigorous debate, criticism, and vision. If anything, the collapse of communism ought to free the left's thinking from any residual fantasies about the necessity, let alone the virtue, of the party-state.

What is discredited is arbitrary power—"private" or "public." Here is where the two main traditions of opposition ought to work out articles of confederation. Liberalism in the European sense—the belief in liberty—resists the state; democratic socialism resists capital. An alliance needs to be formed. Where there are conflicts between goals, as inevitably there will be, bargains have to be struck. Whatever alliance is formed will have to be reformed, and reformed again—this is in the nature of a complicated society. What cannot be compromised, though, is our shared commitment to democratic values.

The first responsibility of intellectuals is criticism. In the name of democracy and equality, we must criticize power, criticize vigorously and relentlessly—criticize even the movements we value, for we know how movements can turn against their own proclaimed ends.

The vistas of potential success for a reformed and consistently democratic left in America may at the moment seem small. But our history of political and social movements offers a different vista. In this country the great majority enjoy a significant degree of democratic freedom; we have, in spite of everything, made some progress in creating opportunities for groups previously discriminated against; we have, however inadequately, managed to introduce some Social Security, universal education, Medicare, and other benefits. Such democratic successes are largely due to ever-recurring waves of radical reform.

The American Revolution itself, then the Jacksonian reforms of the 1820s, the abolitionist movement, and the war to free the slaves, the farm populists of the 1890s, the Socialists and Wobblies of the 1910s, the seventy-year-long movement for women's suffrage, the New Dealers and unionists of the thirties, the civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties, the antiwar mobilizers of the sixties and early seventies, the social criticism of writers like Michael Harrington, the feminist movement of the sixties into the present, the movements to extend individual freedom in new directions, the ecology movement of the present moment—these represent the great tradition of American reform. Every twenty or thirty years

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throughout the history of the United States, there has been a wave of such movements, representing the strength of American life.

We do not believe that human society is ever likely to know perfection. But neither are we willing to stare at every calamity and limply conclude that no solutions can be found. A better society is entirely imaginable in this country—a society that enjoys the freedoms that have always been celebrated by the liberal tradition and that moves toward the egalitarianism, the social justice, and liberation from alienated work that have always been the goals of socialism. It is possible to imagine a society in which working women and men through unions and other institutions will be able to shape the economy and their working lives, and will not have to surrender to corporate power; a society in which the poor will rise at least to the minimal levels of a decent life; a society that can arouse itself for moral and democratic aims and not cave in to the media campaigns and manipulations of powerful elites. We want a world in which the life-chances of children are no longer so dramatically predictable on the basis of economic condition, race, and gender as they are today. Something is wrong with a culture that dismisses such concerns as foolish or naive.

There is a democratic dream to be renewed. It is the practical dream of libertarians like Thomas Paine and feminists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, of socialists and trade unionists like Eugene V. Debs and A. Philip Randolph, of civil rights champions like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., the dream of rebellious slaves, indignant trade unionists, human-rights workers, defenders of individual freedom and of the earth and the air. In the name of the common good that always requires uncommon work, let us do what we can to renew that dream.

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In These Times

GUY MOLYNEUX
Commonwealth Institute

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Spin magazine

JO-ANN MORT
Dissent

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New York City Commissioner of Finance

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Jewish Labor Bund

STEVEN ZIPPERSTEIN
University of California at Los Angeles

A few signers have written to say that they disagree with one or another point in the preceding statement. They have asked that brief explanatory remarks be appended describing their disagreement, even though they are in accord with the statement as a whole.

STANLEY ARONOWITZ: The cynicism of the U.S. intervention in the Gulf has become all too apparent since the end of the war. Not only did the U.S. attack a dictatorship that *it had supported for more than a decade*, but the war resulted in the deaths of perhaps a hundred thousand Iraqis. The democratic left should condemn our involvement in this war.

NAT HENTOFF: I dissent on one count of the statement: abortion rights. A society that kills 1.6 million developing human beings a year hardly requires a strengthening of abortion rights. It ought—especially the humane social democrats within it—examine why so many mechanically support this holocaust.

GEORGE SCIALABBA: I agree strongly with the statement as a whole, so I'm glad to be a signatory. I'm disappointed, though, that it doesn't mention what seem to me the most objectionable aspects of American policy in the Gulf.

The principle on which all signers are said to agree, that "aggression must be resisted," has been regularly disregarded by the United States in the case of aggression by its allies against victims less resource-rich than Kuwait: in Cyprus, in East Timor, in Bangladesh, in the Spanish Sahara, in Lebanon. The United States was itself found guilty of aggression in Nicaragua by the highest international legal tribunal; and the invasion of Panama was condemned by every other member of the Security

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Council and by virtually every other government in the world. It seems clear that the response of the U.S. government to aggression, indeed its decision whether to undertake aggression, has been entirely unprincipled, i.e., determined by economic, military, ideological, or electoral, rather than legal or humanitarian, considerations.

The manipulation of domestic public opinion during the war also surely deserved mention. But my deepest, though vaguest, disquiet about the war concerns its inflammatory effect on international public opinion. Habits of forbearance, trust, cooperation, abstention from military force—these will take generations to become firmly established. Only an unambiguously justified resort to force could fail to make it more difficult to achieve a peaceful international culture. It's just because this is so large and vague but important a topic that I regret that the statement offers no help in thinking about it.

ELLEN WILLIS: While I don't expect to agree with every particular of a would-be consensus statement, I must strongly protest its failure to affirm lesbian and gay rights against the massive homophobic backlash of recent years. As a feminist and a radical, I see freedom of sexual orientation and legitimacy for relationships and households outside the conventional family as bottom-line issues. That these issues were omitted, while at the same time some recipients of the statement objected to endorsing abortion rights, raises the question (not for the first time) of whether the differences between cultural radicals and cultural conservatives preclude a real consensus under the banner of "the left." □

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Richard Rorty

INTELLECTUALS IN POLITICS

Too Far In? Too Far Out?

The Founding Fathers were dubious about democracy. They thought that most of their fellow citizens knew too little to have a voice in political decisions. Writing a Constitution for a country in which few men, and fewer women, were educated well enough to understand the words in which that Constitution was written, the Founders did their best to ensure that the new republic would not degenerate into a participatory democracy—into what they called "mob rule."

In the course of two hundred years, things changed. As the suffrage was extended, literacy spread; iconoclastic newspapers flourished; state universities and community colleges took in more and more students. At each stage of this process, the educated, the people who read and wrote books, assured each other that mob rule could still be avoided as long as we continued to "educate our masters"—made sure that the ordinary voter had enough education to understand what the government was up to.

Nowadays participatory democracy is everybody's explicit aim rather than a danger to be forestalled. The current theory of American government is that education has made the mob versus elite distinction obsolete. Anybody willing to read the newspapers, this theory says, is able to understand and criticize what happens in Washington and in state and local governments: to know which incumbents have demonstrated their rascality and deserve to be thrown out, to tell which candidates are pandering to hatred and resentment and which have sensible proposals to offer.

That is the theory. The practice, everybody admits, falls short. Some of the blame is attached to the high schools, from which people can graduate without any sense of how how the system is supposed to work, much less of how it actually works. Some of the blame is attached to the media, and in particular to television. But we well-educated people, the intellectuals, the people who read magazines like *Dissent*, usually take no blame on ourselves. We assume that if the schools were better and if the media were forced to provide us with free print space and television time, we could do a lot to make democracy work.

The belief that democracy has *not* been working lately, that the ordinary voter is being tricked day and night, is almost universal among us. We pin what hopes we can muster on resurgent labor unions and community organizations, a vast increase in the percentage of the poor who go to the polls, and a Democratic administration. While waiting, we tell each other two sorts of stories about what has gone wrong: about why a country with functioning democratic procedures, a largely literate electorate, and universal adult suffrage is being systematically looted by the rich. The first embodies a conspiracy theory: on this account, the rich have gotten control of all our institutions—the media, the universities, the political parties—and have made it impossible for the poor and weak to be heard. Where the poor are not cheated out of a chance to vote by voter-registration rules and hard-to-get-to polling places, they are cheated out of the information necessary to vote by PAC-financed media blitzes, endlessly repeated big lies.

Leftist intellectuals who think of themselves as "radicals" hold some variant or another of this first theory. Those who, like myself,

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describe themselves as "liberals" typically tell a somewhat different story—one that spreads the blame more widely. This is a story about what Robert Reich calls "the secession of the successful." On this account, the big problem is that white people whose family income is over $20,000 a year have come to think of themselves as having nothing in common with the weak and the poor (especially the black and brown poor). What is beginning to seem like a permanent majority of the voters has ceased to think of any member of a family whose income is less than $20,000 a year as a fellow citizen, a fellow American. The American white middle class has come to view the blacks in the ghettos, the homeless on the streets, and the people who live on food stamps in rusting mobile homes along the back roads of West Virginia as creatures who have to be kept under control. The average suburbanite admits that we have to give these people small welfare checks and surplus cheese occasionally, but feels that their interests have little to do with the interests of the country as a whole. The people who live on food stamps are not "the mob"—they are too weak and pitiful for that. They are just irrelevant, *lumpen*, a tediously expensive nuisance.

There is considerable truth, I think, in both stories. If I incline to the latter, it is only because it allows for a bit of hope; it suggests that things might change, that maybe gradual reform still has a chance. Maybe something like a new New Deal is still a realistic goal. If a conspiracy theory is the whole story—if Richard Condon's novels about the interlocking power of the media lords, the politicians, the military-industrial complex, and the underworld give a reasonably accurate account of what is going on—then nothing short of a violent, and probably impossible, revolution could change America. But if the second story—a story about selfish indifference rather than about a cynical, omnipotent elite—gets at the crucial problem, then maybe reform has a chance. Especially if we have a long, hard recession—one that makes a large part of the middle class realize how fragile their hold on gentility was, how easily a family's income can fall below $20,000, and how little their interests have in common with those of the rich—the secession of the succesful might end. We might cease to be two nations.

If we American intellectuals are to be of *any* political use, we ought to be able to help end this secession. We ought to be able to convince our fellow middle class "symbolic analysts" that their interests are not identical with those of the rich, and to help them think of people who live in rusty mobile homes as fellow citizens. We have not been very successful at doing either lately—not so much because our access to the electorate has been blocked as because we seem to have lost track of our functions. We have come to take a kind of perverse satisfaction in our own ineffectuality and futility.

I have two examples to offer in support of this last claim. The first is the lack of public outcry about the legislation that enabled the savings and loan (S&L) owners to loot the federal treasury. The second is the curious behavior of many American professors of literature—members of the academic disciplines that contain the most vociferous political radicals. My first example suggests that there is something wrong with our journalists and with our professors of law, business, and economics—with the intellectuals who are supposed to tell the voters the facts. My second suggests that there is something wrong with the sort of intellectuals who are supposed to remind the voters of their ideals, expand their imaginations, quicken their sensibilities.

Last year *Newsweek* published a remarkably frank, horribly discouraging, account of the role of the journalist in a democratic society. Larry Martz, a contributing editor, on a page headed "S&Ls: Blaming the Media" (*Newsweek*, June 25, 1990), wrote, "Now, inevitably, anger is building at the media for failing to sound clear warnings about the worst financial mess in the nation's history." He set himself the task of showing that the media had done their job as well as we had any right to expect but that the public—us, the electorate, the voters—had not fulfilled *its* responsibilities.

There had been, Martz told us, 2,500 newpaper and magazine stories about the S&Ls since 1982. *Newsweek* had, as early as 1984,

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informed its readers that a "lot of thrifts are shooting craps with federally insured money" and that the taxpayers might have to ante up billions of dollars to cover their debts. Local newshounds, noticing what the S&Ls in their localities were up to, had written exposés. "But," Martz continued, "lacking political fireworks, the national media were slow to pick up the theme." Admitting that this was unfortunate, and offering various reasons (turf battles between political reporters and financial reporters, for example) why so little was done, Martz said that "perhaps reforms can be made to correct these shortcomings." He made clear, however, that he and his colleagues in journalism were not about to accept what he regarded as a bum rap.

Here are the last nine sentences of Martz's apologia, sentences that will, I hope, cause his dreams to be haunted by the angry ghosts of Lincoln Steffens and Upton Sinclair:

> But don't expect the media to take the lead in the next big crisis. For all the Watergate legends, journalism can't solve problems that courts, legislatures and presidents refuse to deal with. Many who clamor for more aggressive coverage are really asking something else: that the media should actively crusade for just causes that nobody in government wants to push and the voters haven't cared about. That's a seductive idea, but it pushes journalism past its proper bounds. Apart from the sheer difficulty (does anybody really think voters who were bored with Iran-contra could have been excited by the S&L scandal?), reporters are no wiser than anyone else about what should be done. Any such media crusade would trigger a backlash—not asking who's to blame for inaction, but assailing media conspiracies and the arrogance of the self-righteous press. In the end, voters have their own responsibility. The press can lead the horse to water. The horse has to decide whether to drink.

How does the press decide whether it has led us far enough? Easy: just watch out for signs of a backlash. If anybody starts complaining about the arrogance of the press, that will show that the press has once again had the impudence to suggest that it knows better than the government or the public what should be done.

How do journalists know when they are being pushed past "their proper bounds"? Easy: just ask whether one is likely to be accused of being a "crusader" or of being "self-righteous." Far be it from the press to think of itself as educating the electorate; that would be arrogant. After all, who are the journalists to think that they can tell a "just cause" when they see one? Martz's article suggests that we need not postulate, as a conspiracy theory would, ruthless media barons preventing courageous investigative reporters from raking muck. The rank and file of the media no longer, apparently, feel any need to do so—or, at least, to continue to shove the public's noses in it once boredom has been evinced.

I find it hard to believe that an American journalist could have written those sentences for publication. It is hard to understand how the editors of our best mass-circulation weekly could have offered them as *Newsweek*'s conception of the role of the press in the American political process. As far as I am aware, no other newspaper or magazine took the trouble to distance itself from *Newsweek*'s view of the matter.

The closest thing to an opposite number *Newsweek* has in Europe is *Der Spiegel*, a magazine that has built its circulation (a circulation as large, proportionately, as *Newsweek*'s) around crusading, muckraking, and the arrogant insistence that it knows a just cause when it sees one. *Spiegel* has recently been running a series of articles about how America is going down the tubes. The articles recite the usual charges: violent cities, structural unemployment, useless schools, bought legislators, cheap handguns, middle-class contempt for the poor, selfish unwillingness to be taxed, and so on. It is lucky that *Spiegel* did not pick up on Martz's apologia, or it might have added "and a whiny, defensive, self-involved press."

I turn now from the press to my colleagues: my fellow professors. In the six years (1982–88) before the scandal broke, the six years after Congress decided that the S&Ls could invest in anything they pleased with federally insured money—a decision that Charles Keating said he found unbelievable when he first heard

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about it—what did the professors of economics, the professors of banking, the deans of the business schools and the law schools say about this decision? If they said anything, they did not manage to make the rest of us aware of it. (One suspects that if they *had* said anything they would now be reminding us of the fact, and they are not.) In response to legislation that invited the most brazen rip-off of public funds in the history of the world—the result of a harmonious bipartisan agreement to eliminate the risks of a free market in investment capital in order to make potential PAC-contributors richer faster—neither the American press nor the American academy saw any need to bestir itself.

Just suppose, for a moment, that a few hundred outraged professors of economics and banking, joined by a few hundred scandalized professors of commercial law, had, in 1984, picked up on *Newsweek*'s remark that a "lot of thrifts are shooting craps with federally insured money." Suppose that they had chipped in $50 apiece and taken a couple of full-page ads in the *Washington Post* spelling out some of the details of this crap shooting, backing up *Newsweek*'s claim that this "could ultimately cost the government billions of dollars." Suppose that they had offered to serve as a brain-trust, a constant unpaid source of data and argument, for *Newsweek*, on condition that *Newsweek* mount a systematic campaign—that it publish a weekly update on what the S&Ls were up to, and assign lots of reporters to keep up day-to-day pressure on the relevant regulatory agencies, insisting that the agencies answer the hard questions about what was going on.

Suppose that this campaign had been kept up for a solid year, and that more and more local newspapers were incited to run articles on local S&Ls by economics and law professors at local colleges and universities. Is it likely that anybody would have complained, for very long, about "crusading arrogance"? Is it unlikely that *Newsweek* would have covered itself with honor—would have become the paragon of American journalism—and that those outraged professors would have been carried about on the shoulders of their students? Is it unlikely that the agencies and Congress would have taken action by the end of that year? That the taxpayers would have lost only a quarter-trillion dollars instead of a half-trillion, on the deal?

It could have made a big difference. After all, you never know when that last little quarter-trillion may break an economy's back. Our bills are still coming in. But whether it would have made a big difference or not, the point is that the press and the universities are now talking as if the country has learned a useful lesson by losing that half-trillion, while implying that there was unfortunately nothing much anybody could have done any earlier. The only problem, it seems, is that that big dumb horse, the one who won't drink even when led to water—the American electorate—has a short attention span. Certainly there is no suggestion that *we*—the well educated, the intellectuals—are doing anything wrong.

As Martz says, we shouldn't "expect the media to take the lead in the next big crisis." Don't expect the universities to do it either. For we professors, like Martz and his fellow journalists, do not see ourselves as having a responsibility to educate the voters—a responsibility to our fellow citizens who are too busy pouring concrete, cooking fast food, selling software, or otherwise sweating through the day, to read up on the economics of banking, or to note the similarities among the Grant, Harding, and Reagan administrations. The press and the professoriate are acting as if both believed not only that democracy has not been working lately but that there is no longer any point in trying to make it work.

I turn now to a very different sort of intellectual. This is the kind who thinks of himself or herself as "poststructuralist" or "postmodern," as "transgressive" and "subversive." Such people tend to teach in literature departments and to write articles with titles like "Strategies of Subversion: Discourse, Desire, and the Other in 'Gilligan's Island' " (see Brian Morton, "How Not to Write for *Dissent*" in *Dissent*, Summer 1990.) People who do not hang around universities have been made aware of the existence of these professors by reading denunciations of them in the press. Mark

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Edmundson (in "The Will to Cultural Power," *Harper's*, Spring 1989) has noted the enduring hostility of "the critical establishment at the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and the *Washington Post*" to "advanced literary theory."

"Advanced literary theory" means the sort of thing that postmodernist professors say about literature's nature and function. This is usually along the lines of the following quotation from Roland Barthes:

> In fact, today, there is no language site outside bourgeois ideology: our language comes from it, returns to it, remains closed up in it. The only possible rejoinder is neither confrontation nor destruction, but only theft: fragment the old text of culture, science, literature, and change its features according to formulae of disguise, as one disguises stolen goods.

Postmodernists think that because bourgeois ideology (not to mention phallogocentrism, the traditional male claim to an organ called "reason," an organ rudimentary in the female, which can penetrate through appearance to reality) has permeated all of our language and all of our culture, there is no point in trying to offer straightforward political arguments or proposals. We can no longer usefully do the sort of thing Charles Dickens, Upton Sinclair, Jane Addams, and Norman Thomas did: help incite political change by spelling out the details of what the strong and rich are currently doing to the weak and poor. We have to go about in disguise: be indirect, sneaky, complex. To subvert the language of our sexist, racist, colonialist culture—to burrow underneath the language of bourgeois ideology, or to steal and disguise bits of it—we have to write in devious ways. To raise what advanced literary theorists call "issues of race, class, and gender," it is not enough to cite statistics about rape, wifebeating, gaybashing, income differences, and differences in per-pupil expenditure in various school districts. You have to change the language in which to talk about these things. If you don't, anything you say will be complicit with that ubiquitous, insensibly corrupting, bourgeois ideology.

What is this supposed to have to do with literature? Everything. As Paul de Man said:

> What we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism. It follows that, more than any other mode of inquiry, including economics, the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations, as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence.

So if you haven't studied a lot of literature and essayed a lot of literary interpetation, thereby getting clued into the linguistics of literariness, your chances of sucessfully subverting the racist, sexist, and colonialist institutions of bourgeois society, of being appropriately transgressive, are pretty slim. This is why the literature departments—rather than the economics, political science, or sociology departments—have become the red-hot centers of political "radicalism" on the campuses. Any literary theorist whose work does not call for the total transformation of our society is thought insufficiently advanced. (An English professor I know got a letter from a young man who described himself as writing from a shelter for the homeless, where he had been helping out for some months. This man explained that he was utterly discouraged with piecemeal remedies for misery, and had resolved to study the roots of social injustice. So he hoped to be admitted to graduate study in English.)

As a counterpart to Martz, consider Professor Andrew Ross of the Princeton English department. A well-known analyst and theorist of popular culture (rock and movie stars, television series, and the like), the author of *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Ross has also written an introduction to a collection of essays called *Universal Abandon: The Politics of Postmodernism* (the first in a new series called "Cultural Politics"). That introduction gives a good account of the rationale for the switch of attention from electoral to cultural politics that is characteristic of the contemporary American academic left; it represents attitudes that are widespread in American literature departments.

Professor Ross presents himself and his fellow transgressors as deepening and intensifying the Marxist critique of contemporary society. He says:

> A postmodernist politics must complete the

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> Gramscian move to extend the political into all spheres, domains and practices of our culture . . . . Everything is contestable; nothing is off-limits; and no outcomes are guaranteed. These are the conditions of a "philosophy of praxis," which demands of its disciples that they put aside, for the time being, the rank-and-file state of mind—in other words, their willing suspension of disbelief in a fixed ethical horizon.

The rank-and-file state of mind, the one that still has a sense of a fixed ethical horizon, feels outrage when it sees the strong depriving the weak of hope. If you have not suspended disbelief in such a horizon you will be inclined to say, for example, "Nothing is clearer or more certain than that the rest of us should not take advantage of the weakness of children in the ghetto in order to keep our taxes low." A similar sense of outrage once drove the best and brightest young people, the ones most disturbed by inequalities of life chances, to read Rousseau and Voltaire and Paine. Later it drove them to read Marx, Lenin, and Franz Fanon. It is now driving them to study Barthes, de Man, and Ross.

Once they have read Ross, however, they find themselves shunted off the traditional Marxist track. They are directed to what Ross calls "a politics of difference"—one that is concerned more with differences in race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation than with the fact that the rich are continuing to rip off the poor. Further, they will find themselves deflected from the "high" culture that Trotsky shared with Dewey and DuBois and discouraged from exhibiting contempt for schlock. Ross warns them against a puritanical disdain for the world of consumer commodities, against viewing this world as one suitable only for the lumpen, a distraction from political struggle. It would be, he says, "unrealistic to heroicize declarations of immunity to the contagious forms of the commodity world when so much of our social lives are lived as consumers." We educated people must not, Ross thinks, reject popular culture merely because it is sexist, racist, and militarist, for to do so is to fail to understand the healthy disrespect for authority (and, in particular, for the authority of the educated) that underlies such attitudes. We must not, for example, be too hard on sadomasochistic pornography, for we should recognize that "violence and aggressivity are likely to remain constitutive elements of our sexuality."

More generally, Professor Ross wants his students to stop assuming that they, as prospective intellectuals, will be in a position to teach the uneducated what it is they really need and to suggest to them how they might get it. The whole idea of intellectuals knowing something that nonintellectuals should know but do not is, for Ross, largely a refusal to recognize and respect difference. He questions the very idea of "educating our masters," the idea that the educated should try to drag the uneducated away from popular culture by introducing them to terminologies, historical perspectives, and political hopes for which that culture has little room.

Reading Ross usually sends students off into academic politics rather than real politics—into getting a course on racism and sexism made compulsory for freshmen, making homophobia grounds for expulsion from the university, and making sure that new appointees to the faculty meet standards of "political correctness." (This flexible Stalinist term has recently come into serious, unironic use on American campuses—chilling the blood of old-timers like myself.) Ross justifies this change in direction by rejecting the distinction I should like to draw between real, electoral politics and cultural or academic politics:

> [W]hat is at stake here is a redefinition of politics itself; redefined, for example, to account for those arrangements of power that devolve upon the body, sexuality, the unconscious, and so on. In effect, the contradiction of postmodernist politics is one that a more traditional ethics on the left cannot easily accommodate if it still insists on a concept of "politics"—*real* actions and events in the political sphere—that is always above and beyond what continues to be disparaged as the [merely] potentially political effects of cultural transformations.

Ross presumably sees the increasing importance of feminists in English departments and the increasing ability of gay and lesbian students to live uncloseted and unharassed on university campuses as cultural transformations that will eventually, somehow, link up with

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solutions to the problems of the "structurally" unemployed factory workers in the Rust Belt, the stoop laborers along the Rio Grande, and the children in the ghettos. In contrast, I see these transformations as altogether welcome but unlikely to help provide such solutions. I find the linkage that Ross takes for granted very obscure.

Many theorists whose approach to politics parallels Ross's suggest that what the left needs now is a postmodern successor to Marxism, a general theory of oppression—one that can bring issues of race, class, and gender together in an insightful synthesis, burrow under the deepest infrastructures of our present language, and unmask all ideological aberrations at once. These theorists tend to agree that the whole tradition of liberal reform—for example, the sort of thing I was saying about the need for a revivification of the unions and of the Democratic party—is so caught up in these ideological aberrations as to be useless. One can only escape such aberrations, they think, by doing the same deconstructive job on the entire complex of ideas that make up traditional liberal thought—the ideas common to Mill and Dewey, Norman Thomas and Jawarahal Nehru—as feminism has done on patriarchal institutions. As a recent article in the *Journal of Philosophy* by David Gruber put it: "Rather than fight again and again to preserve the dismal, futile hope of our liberal individuality, transgressive thinking would renounce our liberal individuality, declining to be caught in its vortex."

But when thinking gets as "transgressive" as Gruber and Ross would like it to be, it loses contact with the leftist tradition that often, in the past, brought social democrats and Marxists together in common political initiatives. It restricts itself to cultural politics, while losing any relevance to the attempt to use the institutions of a democratic society—the vote, the newspapers, the community organizations—to help the poor resist the rich. Unlike Ross, I do not want to redefine politics. I want to insist on distinguishing cultural politics from "*real* actions and events in the political sphere." I take the term "real" here not to assign a metaphysical status but to be an abbreviation for "likely to redress the balance of power between the rich and the poor." Although nonpoor women and gays will profit enormously from the cultural changes Ross and his colleagues are helping to bring about, I see little reason to think that the poor will, and considerable reason to think that they are going to get considerably less help from the intellectuals than they once did (even as their culture gets more respect). I agree with the novelist Edmund White that

> because of internal bureaucratic squabbles over precedence, tenure and grants, "progressive" academics are more eager to denounce less "politically correct" colleagues than to turn their attention to late century ills—poverty, urban decay, volence, health care, drug addiction, crime, child care in the ghetto, etc.

As I see it, the usual *Washington Post*–style denunciation of the advanced literary theorists as "irrationalist"—as "betraying the traditions of reasoned discourse"—is not to the point. "Irrationalism" is a charge that has been flung at everybody from Socrates to William James, at every thinker who challenged familiar pieties. My complaint is not that the postmodernists have "abandoned reason" nor that they are staining the purity of hitherto innocent academic disciplines and thereby destroying the universities. It is that they have given up on the idea of democratic politics, of mobilizing moral outrage in defense of the weak, of drawing upon a moral vocabulary common to the well educated and the badly educated, to those who get paid for analyzing symbols and those who get paid for pouring concrete or dishing up cheeseburgers.

Writers like Ross put words like "freedom," "independence," and "autonomy" in shudder quotes. They have no use for the vocabulary that was used by both the bourgeois liberals and the Marxists to express their common hopes. Because these theorists no longer think of themselves as citizens of a functioning democracy, they are producing a generation of radical students who think of "the system" as irredeemable, and who therefore can think of nothing better to do with their sense of moral outrage than to fling themselves into curricular

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change. Transgressive thinkers like Professor Ross are creating a left that spends much more time thinking about the undergraduate curriculum than it does thinking about structural unemployment or health insurance or tax bases or PACs—a left with no time for old-fashioned meat-and-potatoes proposals for reform.

The more these thinkers tell their students that the root cause of the suffering they see around them is "Western technological thinking" or "phallogocentrism" or "liberal individualism" rather than old-fashioned greed and selfishness, the more likely those students are to think that by detecting sexism in a soap opera (or Tudor agrarian policies beneath the surface of an Elizabethan pastoral or homophobia lurking behind Kant's *Critiques*) they are striking a blow for human freedom. The more such students are told that the most useful thing they can do is to unmask ideological aberrations, or to celebrate difference, the more likely they are to dismiss proposals for reform legislation, or movements to elect reform candidates, as mere distractions.

So much for my two examples of futile intellectuals—the people who could have warned us that the S&Ls were ripping us off and didn't, and the people who rise above petty matters like Congress's decision to insure crapshooters and instead criticize the "liberal individualism" supposedly common to the Keating Five and the Five's victimized constituents. In targeting these two examples, I am not saying that American journalists and professors are of no use to American public life; I am quite aware that, if it were not for the newspapers rubbing our noses in the lives of ghetto children and academics like Robert Reich deploying the statistics of selfishness, our country would become even more heartless than it is. But I am saying that Martz and Ross look a lot alike.

Both men imply that intellectuals can no longer hope to do what they once hoped to do: use the mechanisms of democratic government to help prevent the rich from ripping off the poor, the strong from trampling on the weak. Both are redefining the scope of their own professional activity and their relation to democratic politics so as to legitimize this hopelessness. Martz suggests that the journalists must work within the confines of the circulation figures and the ratings, realize that it is worse to bore or antagonize your audience than to let them continue hurting themselves and others. Ross suggests that academics stick to what they do best—trashing the work of previous academics, improvising new professional jargon, building up networks among young scholars in order to change the self-images of academic disciplines. He wants to redefine politics so that the campuses are where the real political action is. Surely the cynical rippers-off could wish for nothing better than that all the journalists should agree with Martz about the need to avoid "arrogance" and that all the professors should agree with Professor Ross about the need for a redefinition of politics?

Both Martz and Ross seem to have abandoned the idea that leftist intellectuals can appeal to the national conscience, can use their access to print and podiums to function as fellow citizens. Martz's big nondrinking horse is too dumb to have a conscience. The popular culture Ross celebrates is too intent on differences and on defiance of authority to allow space for the unifying force of shared moral indignation.

Because both men are unable to function as citizens of a democracy, both are in danger of falling into the role of cynical outsider—someone who always knew, deep down inside, that democracy was not going to work. Both have given up the hope that any constitutional democracy with a literate electorate, a free press, and free universities will be able, eventually, to pull itself together and transform itself into a proud, confident, egalitarian, cooperative commonwealth. That hope inspired ten earlier generations of American leftist intellectuals. Surely it is too soon to give it up? □

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Robert A. Dahl

DEMOCRACY, MAJORITY RULE, AND GORBACHEV'S REFERENDUM

JULY 1991

Following the referendum on the union held last March, President Mikhail Gorbachev and his supporters claimed that the outcome demonstrated that a majority of the people in the Soviet Union wanted to maintain the union. Putting aside the ambiguity in the wording of the referendum itself, by invoking the principle of majority rule to support his claim to authority over the six republics seeking independence, Gorbachev triggered a process of questioning that failed to produce the solutions he intended.

Confronted by the obvious practical fact that his claim was not accepted by the people in the republics asserting their right to secession and independence, Gorbachev soon turned to the more realistic and appropriate process of negotiations among the nine republics favorable to maintaining the union. The union treaty resulting from these negotiations was to be open for signature on August 20.

While Gorbachev's initial attempt to apply the principle of majority rule to the question of independence was a practical failure, it raised a number of issues relevant not only to the Soviet Union but to other countries confronting claims to autonomy or outright independence—Canada, for example, or Yugoslavia. Even if we ignore the practical issues, the idea of majority rule as a solution quickly runs into deep difficulties. At the outset we confront the intractable problem of the legitimacy or propriety of the political unit within which majority rule operates. To be sure, the will of the majority may be morally binding on those who consent to be governed by the principle of majority rule, even when they are outvoted. But should it obligate those who refuse their consent, not because they deny the validity of majority rule within a properly constituted democratic unit but because the political unit is itself seen as illegitimate? We can readily imagine a Lithuanian, for example, responding to Gorbachev, "Of course I believe in majority rule, and I'm more than willing to consent to it—but the only majority I will agree to obey is a majority of *my* people in *my* country, not a majority of people in your empire."

The problem of what constitutes a proper political unit surfaces in all sorts of places, expected and unexpected. People in Quebec insist on greater autonomy, perhaps even independence, not because they reject majority rule but because they do not believe that they should be governed by English-speaking majorities of Canadians. In 1905 the Norwegian people insisted on and gained full independence from Sweden because they wanted their country to be governed by majorities of their own people, and their own people were Norwegians. In federal systems the appropriate majorities are sometimes state, provincial, or cantonal, sometimes national. In the United States we insist that school systems should be controlled by officials accountable to local not national majorities; in France it is the other way around. And so on.

Gorbachev (along with many others) appears not to understand that the principle of majority rule cannot rightly be used to decide its own domain. A justifiable decision on the question of the proper political unit cannot be arrived at by majority vote, because the principle itself presupposes that a proper unit already exists.

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The Lithuanians, it appears, are committed to majority rule; they are probably committed to it more strongly than Gorbachev himself, but they want the principle to be applied within a properly constituted unit: Lithuania. For Gorbachev to say that the Soviet Union is the proper unit, and therefore a majority of its people are entitled to decide the matter, simply begs the question. Why, a Lithuanian is entitled to ask, is the Soviet Union the proper unit of government? Why isn't Lithuania? Gorbachev's referendum cannot possibly provide the answer.

If Gorbachev is wrong, does this mean the republics demanding independence are necessarily right? More broadly, does every nationality in the Soviet Union have a right to independence if a majority of that nationality wants it? The difficulty with this solution is that the defects of the majority principle cut both ways: if majority rule can't rightly be used to decide what constitutes a political unit and therefore can't justify a decision about the boundaries of a larger entity like the USSR, then the principle also can't justify a decision about the boundaries of a the smaller unit like Lithuania.

Can we extract a solution from the venerable idea of consent? From the seventeenth century onward, the notion of consent was used to provide a moral foundation for the idea of a democratic state. Might we not ensure consent by treating political autonomy as an absolute right? On this assumption, autonomy would have to be granted to any group wishing it, provided only that the group could show convincingly that its new unit would be democratically governed. Since any group held against its will within an existing state would be entitled to leave that state and form its own unit, compulsory membership in a state would be eliminated. Sooner or later, then, the boundaries of every state would rest on the unanimous consent of its members. The independent Republic of Georgia would have to grant independence to the South Ossettians, Russia to the North Ossettians, and a new Republic of Ossettia would be formed.

This is an enticing doctrine. It is called anarchism. One lethal difficulty with fissiparous anarchism is that an independent political association (let me avoid the term state for the moment) might have the unanimous consent of its members and still inflict great harm on people outside the association. Consider pollution, to take only one example, or monopoly control over a natural resource like water, or public health and the spread of contagious diseases. Or bullying one's neighbors with the threat of nuclear arms. And so on. The potentiality of harming one's neighbors is a consequence so relevant to the case of the Soviet Union that I want to come back to it later on.

A further difficulty: unlike the Georgians or the Ossettians, discontented minorities do not necessarily occupy a piece of common territory. Instead they often live intermingled with the members of the majority, like the Russians in Lithuania or the Ukraine, the Moslems in India, and the Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and the Soviet Union. It has been estimated that about one-fifth of the people in the Soviet Union live outside the boundaries of their ethnic republics. Furthermore, minorities are not necessarily ethnic minorities: in democratic countries there is a minority view on virtually every public issue (otherwise it wouldn't be an issue). Some minorities are persistently on the losing side, like opponents of the federal income tax in the United States. If minorities were to have an absolute right to form an association independent of the larger group, at least on matters most important to them, either that right would have to be restricted arbitrarily to the members of minorities occupying an identifiable piece of ground, or else the right would apply equally to minorities of all kinds. But if the right were applied to all, then any group that opposed a law could insist that since the law lacked its consent, its members must be exempt from the application of the law, even though the law had been passed by a majority or their representatives, and quite possibly an overwhelming majority.

Because of these difficulties (and for other reasons as well) no country guarantees autonomy to minorities as an absolute right, nor is any likely to. In short, neither the American Bill of Rights nor the Helsinki agreement

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endorses philosophical anarchism. We can hardly insist that the Soviets adhere to principles that are not upheld anywhere else in the world.

Surely, you might say, there must be a principle on which we can reasonably try to decide questions about the proper boundaries for political units, about relations between what, for the sake of convenience we might call the Group and the Central Country. A crisp, unimpeachable solution would be a marvelous achievement of political theory or practice. Alas, no altogether satisfactory solution seems to exist.

In practice, as distinct from theory, the usual solution has been force plus time. Nations have been cobbled together by rulers and, by means of coercion, boundaries have been made to stick long enough for the old loyalties to weaken until they no longer pose a substantial threat; or the coercion imposed by the Central Country fails and new boundaries are drawn, which in due time become more or less acceptable to the Group; or tensions are eased by allowing the Group local autonomy short of outright independence, in the form of regions, provinces, states, cantons, and the like; or the energies of the Group are diverted to nationalist political parties operating within the political system; and so on.

Sometimes, of course, no solution works, and the conflict and killings go on and on, as in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Israel and the Occupied Territories, Sri Lanka, Spain and the Basque region.

Force, after all, was the American solution in 1861. We Americans like to forget what historians of the Civil War keep telling us: during the first two years of that bloody civil strife, the war aims of Lincoln, and probably of most northerners, did not include the abolition of slavery. Quite the contrary: at the outset Lincoln was prepared to guarantee the seceding states a constitutional right to slavery if that had to be the price of keeping the slave states in the Union. His clear and often stated object was not the abolition of slavery; it was the preservation of the union. Although the northern cause was ultimately ennobled by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, we need to ask ourselves whether the sacrifice of six hundred thousand lives would have been justifiable if, in the absence of that ennobling outcome, the only justification for the slaughter had been to keep certain states from forming an independent nation.

My point, however, is not to recast the American Civil War into what it was not. I wish only to suggest that our Civil War does not provide an analogy from which to draw conclusions relevant to the question of secession in the Soviet Union today.

Even if force has been a common solution in the past, today Gorbachev is unlikely to get away with the argument that he is entitled to use it in order to hold his empire together. Attempts to employ force will produce outrage abroad and at home. Because of protests arising internationally and within the Soviet Union, it may not be possible for Gorbachev or his successors to hold the Soviet empire together by naked force. It would surely be imprudent to try.

The smaller republics are, however, highly vulnerable to economic coercion. All of the republics other than Russia itself export a high proportion of their output to other republics: the amount is over 60 percent for the three Baltic republics, Moldavia, and Armenia; over 50 percent for Georgia. Their exports abroad, on the other hand, are small, ranging from less than 6 percent for Moldavia to 1.3 percent for Armenia. What is more, even if the republics were freed from the economic demands of the central government, they would find it difficult for some years to be economically independent of the Soviet Union for the simple reason that their products are generally not competitive in foreign markets. Lithuania, for example, could not sell its dairy products at the prices prevailing in the European Economic Community. In addition, their own consumption and production in these smaller republics depends highly on imports from elsewhere in the Soviet Union, particularly Russia and the Ukraine.

In attempting to dissuade the republics from leaving the union, therefore, the Soviet leadership may choose to apply economic coercion: by cutting off crucial energy supplies, for example. Indeed, according to remarks made in

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Moscow last March by a high party official to a half dozen Yale political scientists, a commission charged with exactly that function was already in the process of being established.

Although economic coercion may be easier to conceal than military coercion, particularly in the chaotic economic circumstances now prevailing in the Soviet Union, it cannot be hidden indefinitely, and it too is bound to create serious criticism at home and abroad. In short, if coercion, whether physical or economic, is the only card the Soviet leadership has to play it probably cannot prevent the republics from seceding, though it may persuade them to engage in negotiations. In any case, Soviet leaders cannot reasonably justify their use of coercion, military or economic, by spurious arguments about majority rule.

If the high ground of majority rule cannot reasonably be used for building a sound case for either side—secession or enforced membership—are democrats, whether inside or outside the Soviet Union, left entirely without grounds for reasonable judgments on this perplexing matter? Gorbachev likes to buttress his case with constitutional arguments. Yet as Americans know, legal-minded southerners managed to construe a Constitution that contained no explicit right to secession as implying the existence of just such a right; and in the end neither constitutional debate nor Chief Justice Taney's absurd attempt to resolve the issue in the *Dred Scott* decision prevented civil war. Gorbachev's constitutional case against secession is even weaker than Lincoln's, not only because the 1977 constitution explicitly acknowledges such a right* but even more because that constitution lacks any shred of democratic legitimacy—least of all in countries annexed to the Soviet Union by force. The southern states had at least ratified the Constitution in conventions that by the standards of the time were taken as sufficient to signify their consent.

Confronted by claims and counterclaims that have no grounds in democratic principles, values, or practices, one can of course make judgments on other grounds: on strategic or geopolitical grounds, for example, or by judging which of two undemocratic regimes is likely to be the less objectionable. The White House and Secretary Baker may decide that maintaining tolerable relations with the Kremlin is more important to American interests than maintaining tolerable relations with Vilnius. Some members of Congress, perhaps with an eye to their constituents, may make the opposite judgment.

In some such fashion one can, of course, reach judgments, even though they would not be defensible on democratic grounds. Are we, then, entirely bereft of standards more embedded in democratic values and aspirations? I think not. There are several relevant questions that an advocate of democracy should try to answer in attempting to reach a morally justifiable judgment about contests for autonomy between a group and the country of which it is a part. (For convenience, hereafter I'll refer to the Group and the Central Country). To be sure, answers to these questions will not produce irrefutable and unambiguous judgments; but they can help a democrat to arrive at the messy mixtures of prudence, principle, and hunch that are the essence of most judgments on complex political questions.

First, we must ask whether the territorial

* On April 3, 1990, Gorbachev signed a law passed by the Congress of USSR People's Deputies establishing "the procedure for resolving questions connected with a Union republic's secession from the USSR in accordance with Article 72 of the USSR Constitution." Article 6 requires that "the decision on the Union republic's secession from the USSR be deemed to be adopted by means of a referendum if at least two-thirds of the USSR citizens permanently resident on the republic's territory . . . vote in favor of it." Article 9 provides that "the Congress of USSR People's Deputies lays down a transitional period not exceeding five years within which questions arising in connection with the republic's secession from the USSR must be resolved." If secession fails to be adopted, "a new referendum on the question may be held not less than 10 years after the holding of the previous referendum." On November 24, 1990, the Kremlin proposed a "Draft Union Treaty." Although a "basic principle" is "the inalienable right of every people to self-determination, self-government, and the autonomous resolution of all questions of its development," the powers granted to the union could, if broadly interpreted, considerably restrict the autonomy of the republics.

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boundaries claimed by the Group are clear and mutually understood. Or are they contested? If they are contested, then a fair settlement may require negotiations, arbitration, or adjudication.

Second, do we have satisfactory grounds for believing that the people within these boundaries clearly want autonomy, and, if so, do we know whether they want complete independence or only a more limited form of autonomy (as with provinces, cantons, or federated states, for example)? But what does it mean to say that "the people clearly want" autonomy in some form? Here we circle back to the majority principle and its problems. At a minimum, demands for political autonomy, whether for full independence or only partial autonomy, can hardly be justified unless it can be shown that a majority of people in the proposed unit definitely want autonomy, and would choose it given a reasonable understanding of the likely consequences.

But for the reasons I've already suggested, although *necessary*, the choice of a majority can hardly be *sufficient* to justify autonomy. For there are good grounds for rejecting a claim to political autonomy even if it is backed by a majority of the people in the proposed political unit.

For one thing (and this is the third question a democrat needs to ask), are we satisfied that the people within the proposed unit really intend to govern themselves democratically? There is no strong reason—from a democratic point of view, at any rate—to support a group's demands for political autonomy if we have good grounds for believing that the outcome of autonomy would be a nondemocratic regime, in which, ironically, the principle of majority rule would itself be inoperative.

The third question implies a fourth. Are we satisfied that if the Group achieves the autonomy it demands, the rights of *minorities* within the now autonomous unit will be adequately protected? It may seem paradoxical, but the questions I am posing apply not only to the dispute between the Central Country and the Group demanding autonomy. In principle they apply to any center and any group. For if the Group achieves its autonomy, it becomes,

Tanks prepare to leave the Russian Parliament area as the coup fails. David Blumenfeld/IMPACT VISUALS

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so to speak, the new Central Country vis-à-vis minority groups within its jurisdiction. If autonomy is fair for the Group (now the Central Country), then it is fair for a minority within its boundaries (now the Group vis-à-vis the new Central Country).

What constitutes adequate protection for minority rights is a question so thorny that I am not going to attempt an answer. But to oblige people to obey laws to which they have not given their consent violates (and who should know better than Americans?) a very fundamental democratic principle. Consequently, at a minimum, minorities should have the full and equal rights of citizenship in a democratic order, including the right to unforced emigration.

The fourth question in turn suggests a fifth that a democrat is obliged to ask. Are there good reasons for believing that autonomy for the Group would result in serious harm to people in the Central Country? Although Soviet leaders may exaggerate the risks, they do have some legitimate concerns. For one thing, nuclear weapons and facilities for producing them are said to be scattered around the country. Whether they exist in any republic likely to seek independence I am not in a position to know. If they do, then the central authorities would surely be entitled to remove the weapons and disarm the facilities. (In all likelihood they have already done so.)

A more intractable problem may be posed by industries in which a high proportion of output comes from a single producer—a result of one of the most egregious follies of Soviet central planners and their infatuation with giantism. The Soviet authorities have a legitimate interest in ensuring that autonomy does not leave the rest of the union at the mercy of the monopolistic or oligopolistic power of suppliers in a seceding republic. Conversely, of course, a republic is likely to have an interest in maintaining its outlet in the Soviet Union. But the appropriate arrangements will not come about without negotations.

Minorities within the republics also pose a problem. While one should not be overly impressed by the Kremlin's sudden conversion to the cause of minority rights in the republics, the prospect of discrimination and, worse, of uncontrollable ethnic violence is a matter in which not only the Kremlin has a legitimate concern but the rest of the world as well.

It would be a mistake to assume, then, that disputes over autonomy in the Soviet Union could be reasonably and justly settled if only the leadership in the Kremlin and the republics would abide by simple, straightforward, democratic principles. These disputes entail genuine conflicts of legitimate interests on both sides. Although Gorbachev was certainly not entitled to insist that negotiations follow the protracted process outlined in a law enacted under a constitution that has no moral validity, surely he is right in saying that the republics ought to be willing to negotiate over the terms of a settlement. Just as the Kremlin has no a priori right to prevent the secession of republics that have been incorporated by force into the union, so the republics have no a priori right to secede without entering into negotiations in good faith. □

Ed. Note: Events in the Soviet Union overtook us as we went to press. We will have further analyses in future issues of the magazine.

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Tadeusz Kowalik

THE COSTS OF "SHOCK THERAPY"

Economic Transition in Poland

At the beginning of 1990, the ideology of laissez-faire had made a triumphal return to the Polish political scene, and nothing appeared likely to disturb the self-assurance of the neoliberals. By now, however, there are increasing signs of disarray, crisis, and pessimism among those recently triumphal. In many of his recent speeches in the West, President Lech Walesa has warned that Poland's program of economic reform may collapse. The possibility of such a collapse has also been referred to by the new head of Solidarity, Marian Krzaklewski. In an interview under the title "The Vicious Circle of Post-Communism," a well-known sociologist, Edmund Mokrzycki, made the following comments on the pride and joy of the neoliberals, the program of Finance Minister Balcerowicz:

> Is the only way out of this vicious circle via a dramatic revolution—in other words, a breakdown of the entire system—or will we manage to set in motion a self-generating development? Balcerowicz assumed that such a mechanism would be provided by liberalization, combined with a radical stabilization program. After fourteen months, we have reason to doubt its effectiveness. It has not set in motion sufficiently strong processes of systemic change. On the other hand, it has set in motion . . . an extremely dangerous and one-sided process in which the state is relinquishing its ownership of the means of production. One-sided—because to date the reforms have not succeeded in creating a new group of owners (*Rzeczpospolita*, March 18, 1991).

The neoliberals' hasty search for a "middle class," or rather the attempt to create one artificially, says Mozrkycki, simply indicates their naiveté regarding the possibility of bypassing what, in the West, proved to be a lengthy process of socioeconomic development. This is just one of many critical analyses of the Balcerowicz program and its impact.

Following Walesa's electoral victory, a couple of neoliberals were appointed to the government. The new prime minister, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, says that he wants to be another Milton Friedman but that he has to recognize reality and must often take steps that conflict with his beliefs. He has said he wants to move gradually by reorganizing and modernizing rather than forcing widespread factory closings, even in the case of the industrial giants recently threatened with immediate bankruptcy. "Our decision," said Bielecki, "was taken in light of concrete reality, not the desire to realize a dream or certain philosophical ideas." We should, of course, be cautious in interpreting this statement literally, since the most forceful man in the government, Leszek Balcerowicz, does indeed want to realize "certain philosophical ideas." Balcerowicz has only one response when asked about future development: "More of the same but faster!"

Part of the "concrete reality" that currently confronts the government are numerous open conflicts over wages and living standards. Obliged to negotiate with ever new groups of workers, members of the government complain that they cannot work normally. Generally speaking, the neoliberal euphoria, which derived from the belief that there was considerable social support for "shock therapy," is a thing of the past. It seems that a situation has emerged in which it might be possible to choose a path that would be less painful over a longer period. But this has not yet happened,

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and we have to be cautious in formulating even slightly optimistic forecasts—although some grounds for optimism are emerging.

Here I want to review the factors that still make it difficult to have a serious public discussion on alternatives to the Balcerowicz program.

Political Fragmentation

The most serious obstacle is political fragmentation. This fragmentation is evident in the fact that more than sixty political parties have been officially registered, while there are over a hundred other groupings of a semipolitical nature. Fragmentation is also evident within Solidarity. In addition to the already open conflict between the elite groups that have emerged from Solidarity and the workers' part of the movement, the trade union itself has become an arena in which the most varied political tendencies are vying for power and influence. In all likelihood, Solidarity's decision to take part in the forthcoming parliamentary elections will increase the political divisions within the union. (This decision was more or less forced on Solidarity, because its leaders suddenly realized that workers' interests were not adequately represented in parliament.)

In Western Europe, and particularly in Scandinavia, the labor movement has a natural ally in left-wing, social democratic parties. In Poland there are no real left-wing parties other than the so-called social democratic party, which emerged out of the old Communist party. Thus the absence of a "middle class" and its institutions, which is bemoaned by the new establishment, is matched by the absence of a strong social democratic movement.

In the countries of East-Central Europe, communism has publicly destroyed and discredited not only socialism but also any kind of social democracy. Of course, various social democratic discussion clubs and papers do exist, but they have few resources and little influence. This becomes even more apparent when we compare these groups with the Catholic Church, traditionally conservative and, since the election of a Polish pope, outright triumphal. So far, only the church has succeeded in maintaining its unity, or at least the appearance of unity. In Poland only the church and perhaps the army constitute a cohesive social force. But neither of them provides a basis from which to formulate a program for the transformation of the country. The church hierarchy is even keeping its distance from the numerous Christian-democratic and nationalist parties that have recently emerged, perhaps because it does not want to risk its prestige by accepting direct responsibility for social issues at a time when it seems certain that the aspirations of most of the population are not going to be realized.

"Conditionality"

These issues, particularly the privileged role and conservatism of the church, are well known. Less well known are two other obstacles to the formulation of a suitable program of social transformation: the cultural-ideological influence of the Western right and Poland's dependence on the West as a result of the "debt trap."

Journalists and social psychologists have recently begun to comment on the "Americanization" of intellectual life in Poland, expressed in a flood of trash in literature, television, and cinema. "Sovietization" has been replaced by "Americanization." Both cases involve an influx of shoddy goods and a tendency to copy slavishly. It is unfortunate that the "Great Transformation" in Poland, which began in 1980–81, coincided with the height of Reaganism and Thatcherism, which have come to constitute the most popular stereotype of Anglo-Saxon culture. In economics, this is expressed in the popularity of Milton and Rose Friedman's book *Free to Choose* and the works of George Gilder, Michael Novak, and so on. Milton Friedman has recommended that Poland adopt not the model of modern American capitalism, which has become infected with social welfare if not socialism, but the true "free market" model of a hundred years ago. The Polish government has appointed Professor Jeffrey Sachs as its adviser. Listening to Sachs address the Solidarity members of parliament in 1989, I was reminded of the Soviet emissaries of the 1940s

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and 1950s who used to call on us to implement the most radical and rapid "revolution." In the same spirit, although in the opposite direction, Sachs called on us to implement "shock therapy," which, by reducing inflation, would stabilize the economy and simultaneously create a market system.

Americans are fortunate in that they have never experienced feudalism. This means they generally have great difficulty in understanding the role tradition plays in social life. Americans find it difficult to understand that various development programs applied in the Third World, however rational they may appear from the economic point of view, are doomed to failure unless they take account of local customs, deep-rooted institutions, and social relations formed over centuries. Jeffrey Sachs strikes me as a quintessential example of "the quick and easy" American approach to success, a typical "constructivist," in Karl Popper's sense of someone who views systemic transformation simply as a sociotechnical issue. And he was chosen to be the chief economic adviser to Balcerowicz and is seen in Poland as the leading economist of the United States, a country that has one of the richest traditions in economics in the world.

I do not deny that Balcerowicz and Sachs have had some success in stabilizing the economy, particularly market relations, in moving from a situation of acute shortages to one in which a startling array of consumer goods is available, and in reducing the rate of inflation (although it remains so high that the premier himself has referred to it as insane). But as a procedure intended to change the economic system, "shock therapy" has proved a disaster. Whatever its achievements, they are dwarfed by the enormous social costs. The process was supposed to be something like Schumpeter's "creative destruction": short-lived crisis and recession were supposed to create the conditions for modernization, increased innovation. and so on. But what do we have? We have mass unemployment (more than 1.2 million), and it is expected to increase. Despite this, labor discipline has barely improved, and improvement in quality of output is virtually imperceptible. Not only has so-called hidden unemployment not declined—and this was supposed to be one of the chief aims of the whole operation—but, relative to industrial output, it has actually increased (industrial output has fallen by 24 percent and now is 40 percent lower than at the end of 1989, employment by 11 percent). This means that unit costs have increased considerably and that the economy has become even more inefficient.

The process of "creative destruction" has turned out to be lopsided: plenty of destruction but so far little creativity. An increasing number of economists, political scientists, and sociologists are referring to the recession that has been produced by "shock therapy" as stagnation, slumpflation, and depression.

Faced with the above, Sachs has turned out to be a propaganda virtuoso. He complains about the tyranny of statistics and boldly questions the validity of statistical data. He has several times stated in the Western press that living standards in Poland have not really declined. He arrived at this astonishing result by simply multiplying wages in zlotys by the current dollar exchange rate—even though everyone knows that until 1990, exchange rates varied widely and were highly artificial. Sachs's virtuosity is such that recently he has begun to take account of local conditions. Interviewed by a Polish newspaper, he agreed that living standards had declined, but "at the most" by 20 percent. If he had tried to tell the Polish public that real wages had increased, he might have been lynched.

Now a few comments about the dependence of our economic policy on the West. I shall ignore the issue of the notorious "conditionality" imposed in the case of loans from the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund), not just because the matter is well known but also because there was very little difference of opinion between the leadership of these two institutions and Polish government officials. In 1989–90 there was such a widespread conviction that we would never overcome our economic crisis unless we had outside assistance that the Polish government would have agreed to any conditions.

Recently the mass media have begun to raise

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the issue of Polish sovereignty in relation to Western governments. This is related to Walesa's abrupt, and hitherto unexplained, shift in attitude toward the Balcerowicz program. Following his election as president, Walesa's sharp criticism of the plan suddenly gave way to statements regarding the need for the plan to be maintained and for Balcerowicz to retain his place in the government. Moreover, it was Balcerowicz who was asked, at one point, to form the new government. There was a widespread public perception that this occurred as a result of external pressure. That this was so was publicly suggested by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, leader of the Center Alliance.[1]

I am not suggesting that we are dealing with external intervention in its crudest form, but it is worth noting that on December 20, 1990, the following item appeared in the Polish press:

> Deputy Prime Minister Balcerowicz received Thomas W. Simons, U.S. Ambassador to Poland. The meeting took place at the request of the ambassador. The subject of the meeting was the current state of economic relations between Poland and the United States and prospects for their further development. The possibility of further cooperation within the forum of international institutions was also reviewed, including U.S. support for an extension of the stabilization fund for 1991 (*Zycie Warszawy*, December 20, 1990).

The only way to interpret this information is that the United States wants the Balcerowicz plan to be continued and considers that the presence of Balcerowicz himself in the government is the best (if not the only) guarantee of this. The date of the ambassador's visit is extremely important. It took place several days before the formation of the new cabinet was completed. Tadeusz Mazowiecki was still officially premier, although his government had already resigned. Second, all this took place after Mazowiecki had been beaten by Stan Tyminski, whose election propaganda had made much use of the argument that "an international economic war" was being waged against Poland and that this was the real cause of the downturn in production, the fall in living standards, and so on.

Here is another example. The Polish government and the IMF are currently finalizing a three-year stabilization program that is supposed to determine the general direction of our economic policy. The draft version of this program has not been published. There has been no public debate about it. At the same time, I am sure, the contents are known to international institutions and some governments. The only ones who know nothing about it are ordinary Poles. Even if there were reasons for the document itself (the letter of intent) to remain confidential for the time being, there is no reason why the government should not outline the general direction of economic development over the next few years and call for a public debate on the issues. Mazowiecki's government was frequently reproached for its failure to follow such a course when the Balcerowicz program was being drawn up. No lessons have been learned from this.

Revolution from Above

It should be remembered that the policies of the previous, the current, and almost certainly the next few Polish governments have not been and will not be concerned with creating the basis for a new social order. Ordinary people are paying an enormous price, not only for mistakes but also for what are viewed as successes. The price is a decline in the standard of living, the loss of guaranteed employment, and the sudden unavailability of some services. In the year of the great breakthrough—1989—Poland found itself in the role of pioneer. In such a situation, the government and the parliament must have the right to make mistakes and to experiment. The new government should not, however, have departed without public debate (particularly within Solidarity) from the program accepted at the Round Table. Generally speaking, this program was consistent with the "Program for a Self-Governing Republic" passed by the First Solidarity Congress in October 1981. The government, nevertheless, immediately indicated its intention to create a market economy based on private ownership. Given our traditions, level of socioeconomic development, absence of infrastructure, and so on, the promise that the new economic system would

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be modeled on that of the developed countries of the West was nothing but a mystification. Such a system will remain well beyond our horizon of possibility for many years to come.

This was just one of the many promises that could not be kept, including the promise that only the first six months of the "shock therapy" would be difficult, that unemployment would not exceed half a million in 1990, that national income and industrial output would decline by only a few percent, that reforms would mop up excess purchasing power but would not bring about a decline in living standards. All the forecasts of economic performance were wildly inaccurate. Gross national income declined not by 3 but by 13 percent, industrial output not by 5 but by more than 24 percent; unemployment is twice the level forecast; consumption fell by more than 28 percent (although food consumption declined very little); prices were supposed to increase by 100 percent over the year but actually went up by 200 percent.

Even with such a gap between forecasts and actual results, the government might still have come out ahead if it had properly analyzed the reasons for the gap and drawn the necessary conclusions. Instead, it pretended that the goals of the Balcerowicz plan had been essentially achieved and that the country was making the best of its pioneering role. This attitude, combined with brash statements to the effect that we could expect more of the same but at a more rapid pace, was bound to give rise to widespread frustration, public mistrust of politicians, and political apathy.

The Obsession with Acceleration

Here, we need to consider the whole issue of "even faster," which is at the root of the vicious circle in which Poland currently finds itself.

"Faster," but "where to?" asks one Polish sociologist. She replies:

> There has been a lot of discussion about whether to transform the country rapidly or slowly, as though we were referring to an athletic contest. Few people have anything to say about where we are hurrying *to*; what kind of capitalism is going to emerge; how much the state should intervene and how much should be left to unfettered market forces; whether we want a welfare state which will subsidize housing, education, health care, and so on, but levy higher taxes, or whether we want lower taxes and a system closer to that preferred by the liberals in which everyone has to look out for him- or herself. . . . It's high time we thought about the long term and stopped assessing change simply in terms of how far we have managed to distance ourselves from communism.[2]

The obsession with acceleration has come to dominate most political discussion. The need for rapid change was, and remains, one of the axioms used to justify the application of "shock therapy." Even those who are now accused of slowing down the pace of change have the most astonishing opinions. For example, Bronislaw Geremek, in a recent book, states that in 1989 he recognized the dangers inherent in the Balcerowicz plan. However, he says, he knew that "we had to set out along this road with all due speed, because Europe had no intention of waiting for us." Geremek does not even ask the question that troubles so many economists: is an excessive dose of "shock therapy" the surest way to rejoin Europe? Summing up our experience of this procedure, one journalist recently noted:

> It is not, after all, much of an achievement to enter Europe quickly simply because the political atmosphere is favorable. It would, however, be a real achievement to become an equal partner, not an agricultural relic or a dumping ground for heavy industry, in other words, a state belonging to a lower category of civilization, a state whose role and place in Europe would once again be decided by forces outside its borders.[3]

Toward Reckless (Re)privatization

The opinion quoted above does not, unfortunately, represent the main trend in political thinking in Poland. Just the opposite: the most astonishing conclusion that is drawn from this "shock therapy" is that we need to speed up the pace of systemic change. The official viewpoint, repeated by many politicians, can be reduced to the assertion that the limited success in introducing market forces into the Polish

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economy is the result of resistance on the part of the old structures, which itself can be explained largely by the fact that marketization has not been accompanied by privatization.

There are people who disagree, but they are ignored. One example is Cezary Jozefiak, chairman of the Senate Economic Committee, a well-known economist who was offered the post of deputy premier before Balcerowicz. Professor Jozefiak is a resident of Lodz, a city particularly hard hit by the recession because it is a center of light industry (largely textiles, production of which has declined by nearly half). While an advocate of the market economy, Jozefiak believes that it is necessary to draw conclusions from the "shock therapy" and to proceed with privatization in such a way as not to bring about another drop in production. He has suggested that the state sector should be divided into four or five blocs to be privatized in successive phases. Only when the first group of plants to be privatized had begun to show an increase in output, productivity, and employment would the second group be privatized, and so on. Other proposals that have been ignored by both the media and government officials are those advocated by a new political grouping, the Labor Solidarity Alliance, whose program for the evolutionary transformation of the economy constitutes the most comprehensive alternative to the Balcerowicz program.

The only issue that is now publicly debated is how to accelerate the pace of change. During his recent visit to Washington, Walesa stated that during his previous visit (in 1989), U.S. officials had convinced him that it was necessary to move slowly. He has since come to believe, however, that changes have to proceed more quickly because they are too painful to string out over a long period. This is particularly true in the area of property relations, which must be transformed through the most rapid possible denationalization of the state sector.

It is impossible to provide here a complete answer to the question of why privatization has yielded such miserable results to date and why the prospects for the immediate future do not inspire advocates of rapid privatization with optimism. (One government official, who was until recently among those responsible for privatization told me that he would like to take a leave of absence and write a book about the impossibility of privatization in Poland.) The most important factors are the following:

First, the painful results of "shock therapy," which has yielded far fewer benefits than anticipated, have aroused in many people a distrust of all government programs. This distrust has received additional impetus from the fact that some politicians make no secret of the fact that rapid privatization will probably lead to a temporary deepening of the recession. In addition, inflation, followed by a sharp deflation, has decimated people's savings. Western and Polish experts agree that, if privatization were carried out on a commercial basis, there would be only enough savings to allow the purchase of a mere 2 percent of the state sector.

Second, the privatization that has taken place since 1987 provides numerous examples of what has come to be known as a "pathological privatization" based on corruption. Public opinion is outraged by the way in which members of the communist nomenklatura have formed their own companies. Established by former apparatchiks, these companies have frequently made huge profits because they had access to machinery and equipment in state factories, have been able to use state workers for private purposes, and have been able to acquire state assets at artificially low prices. There is a widespread perception that national assets have, in this way, been stolen, and that successive Solidarity governments have done little to stop it.

Third, the shape of the newly emerging private sector is frightening workers away from private factories. Trade union officials have received numerous complaints that private entrepreneurs commonly violate labor laws, do not allow union chapters to be formed in their plants, and so on. This is also true of many joint ventures. There are cases in which entrepreneurs who, in their own country, would not dare to violate labor regulations so blatantly and might even allow some employee participation in plant management, behave quite

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differently when they get to Poland. Official propaganda has actually led workers to believe that marketization and privatization are leading to a system that is ill-disposed to working people. A recent opinion survey yielded such statements as: "It may have been only on paper, but in the old days they used to praise working people and extol the value of labor rather than entrepreneurship at any cost," and "Workers don't count any more, only the middle class counts these days."

Finally, we should add the widespread conviction that one of the goals of privatization is to bring about an increase in unemployment.

These and other factors have resulted in a situation in which people are afraid of large-scale privatization. From a number of sociological surveys, the following picture emerges: only a very small percentage of employees would choose to work in the private sector in the future (more that 60 percent would prefer to work in the state sector); only a small percentage intends to buy shares issued as part of privatization; the vast majority of employees are in favor of denationalizing their own place of work through employee ownership and participation in management; even those who are strongly convinced of the need to privatize the state sector are inclined to argue that the enterprise in which they are working ought to remain in the state sector.

Government officials are aware that large-scale privatization is unpopular, but are also convinced that it is impossible to improve efficiency in the state sector. Superficially, there would seem to be some basis for their opinion; as a result of all the talk about impending privatization, both managers and workers in state enterprises are in a state of extreme uncertainty. The fact that they do not have even the minimal feeling of stability necessary for economic activity means that the efficiency of their plants is constantly declining.

The most impatient neoliberals react to this situation by proclaiming that the state sector constitutes a ball and chain that has to be abandoned at any price, even if this means selling it off as scrap metal or giving it away free. Walesa has recently started to think along these lines too, although he has an alternative suggestion as to how to get rid of the ball and chain: he has become a staunch advocate of *Re*privatization in its most sweeping version. He has appointed as his plenipotentiary the scion of a great industrial family, Jerzy Grohman. Grohman has proposed that the government engage in reprivatization by annulling the 1946 law on the nationalization of industry and by returning the maximum amount of confiscated property to former owners or their descendants. Such a move would undermine the entire legal order of the past forty-five years and would burden the State Treasury—in other words, the population—with enormous expenditures.

However, all governments like to receive revenue, particularly those that, like the Polish, are dominated by the minister of finance (Balcerowicz holds this position as well as that of deputy premier). While privatization through the sale of shares generates revenue for the state, reprivatization would simply drain the state coffers because, given the length of time that has elapsed, in most cases it would not be possible to return the property itself, and compensation would have to be paid to former owners. This is the reason for the difference of opinion regarding reprivatization that has emerged between the president's office and the government. The government has demonstrated more resistance than might have been expected and has suggested reprivatization only in those cases where property was nationalized in violation of then existing law. (For example, small factories that were taken over even though they were formally exempt from nationalization.) The government is likely to get its way on this only if its proposal gains the support of the trade unions. Whether this will prove possible remains to be seen.

Some people believe that our economies have already become sufficiently—or even excessively—marketized. In fact, even when you apply "shock therapy," this is a lengthy, evolutionary process, and our economies still have a long road ahead before they can become market economies. Once this is properly

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understood in the West, it opens up the possibility of cooperation between people from different political tendencies, particularly social democrats and liberals (of the John Stuart Mill, not the Hayek-Friedman school).

Here I would like to refer to an instructive report entitled *Precedents for Economic Change in Central Europe and the USSR*, (Oxford Analytical, 1990), which is based on research conducted by more than twenty economists and economic historians. The author, Charles Feinstein, points out that even former West Germany, a country that is in many respects exceptional, took more than ten years to rid itself of the trappings of a war economy and return to a market economy (in many cases, the countries of Eastern Europe are not even returning to but are just beginning to construct a market economy). In the case of Spain, it took thirty years to make the change from a dirigist corporate state. The "Great Transformation" of the postcommunist countries is going to be much more difficult and complicated and is bound to take even longer. The most important thing for the immediate future is to abandon not only post-Marxist but also Hayekian constructivism. An interesting development can already be seen in Poland. The Polish social democrats, who are in a sense partly responsible for (and also burned by) the communist utopia, are much less inclined to view the emergence of a new social order in terms of a great socio-technical operation than are the neoliberals who are now trying to build a new utopia.

Translated by JANE CAVE □

Notes

[1] "Because of circumstances which it would be difficult to make public at the moment, it was not possible to form the government that would have been able to carry out this acceleration. These were complex circumstances which even transcended our national borders." Jaroslaw Kaczynski, interviewed by Marek Henzler in "Przyspieszenie przyjidzie pozniej," *Polityka*, January 19, 1991.

[2] Lena Kolarska Bobinska, interviewed by Agnieszka Wroblewska, *Zycie Warszawy*, November 22, 1990.

[3] Tomasz Jezioranski, *Transformacja polskiej gospodarki*, Warsaw-Krakow, 1990, pp. 105–106.

To Our Contributors:

A few suggestions:

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(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article. We will not consider manuscripts submitted simultaneously to several publications.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility. No dot matrix submissions, *please*.

(4) Notes and footnotes should also be typed double-spaced, on a *separate* sheet. As we're not an academic journal, we prefer that they, wherever possible, be dropped altogether or worked into the text.

(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

(6) Please bear with us—we have accumulated quite a backlog of material, and you may have to wait for a few issues before you see your article in print.

THE EDITORS □

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Michel Rocard and Paul Ricoeur

JUSTICE AND THE MARKET

The following discussion first appeared in the French journal Esprit *and is reprinted here with the permission of the editors. For reasons of space and to omit references purely local to French life, we have edited and abridged the text, indicating cuts by ellipses. Paul Ricoeur is a leading French philosopher, and Michel Rocard was prime minister of France when this conversation took place. He has since resigned.*—EDS.

PAUL RICOEUR: If we are to discuss the kind of society we live in and what kind of society we wish to promote, then we must agree on a common description. That is why it seems necessary to clarify the vocabulary that you yourself have used repeatedly in your speeches. All the more so because the "springtime of peoples" in the East has convinced even the most recalcitrant that it is within our democracies—and democracy constitutes our definitive horizon—that we must build the most just future possible.

The failure of the administered economics in the East actually leaves a whole series of questions for the West. New light is being thrown on notions like "moderated capitalism," "social democracy," and "market economy." These are terms to which you have resorted on occasion; but are they really equivalents? And if not, how can they be distinguished? Plainly, references to the market are obligatory. Some say that economic modernization, of which you are a leading proponent, has unleashed the market in the most brutal form. Too much talk of the market quickly becomes advocacy of the naked logic of the marketplace and of the capitalist as chief economic actor; one becomes enslaved to a conception of society solely as a function of the capitalist organization of market goods.

There are many possibilities of misunderstanding here. I would suggest that we not take the capitalism-socialism antithesis as our starting point but rather start from the idea that society, as a network of institutions, consists in the first place of a vast system of distribution—distribution not in the narrow economic sense but in the sense of a system that provides all sorts of goods and benefits: economic goods, certainly, but also goods like health, education, security, national identity, and citizenship. Consequently, the problem is to determine which of these goods are best distributed according to the rules of the market and which require a different mode of distribution—and if so, what kind?

Only thus, it seems to me, will we be able to clarify notions like moderated capitalism, social democracy, or even socialism; this can be done by relating them to a vision of society conceived as a system of distributive institutions. . . . This view of things was suggested to me by Michael Walzer, of the American political journal *Dissent*, who in his book *Spheres of Justice* argues that a purely procedural view of justice is inadequate, and that we should take into account the nature of the goods to be distributed. . . . To do this, we cannot limit ourselves to simple procedures, to formal rules of allotment, . . . as is the tendency with other American theorists—notably John Rawls, the author of *The Theory of Justice*, which has had an important resonance in France, and which Walzer specifically criticizes. In other words, we should not distribute in the same manner goods like education, health, and commodities, and, even more so, such benefits of citizenship as the right of association, freedom of expression, the right to security, and so on. We thus avoid the

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quandary that lies in wait when we either want all goods to be market goods or want certain goods to stand totally outside the market . . . .

Michel Rocard: I am very sympathetic to this approach. It takes into account the central question of what our conception of society should be. This conception cannot be based on an extension of market logic into all spheres of social and political life. I would augment this question with another one that you might say is more practical, or in any case less directly conceptual, and one that increasingly confronts me as a politician: how will we and how can we decide in favor of this or that system of distribution when several systems confront and compete with one another, despite what you said about the definitive horizon of democracy? How are we going to secure the adoption of whatever system emerges as the best? How can we ensure that the system that wins approval is not a pure and simple market society, given over entirely to competition?

Humanity has actually known several ways of responding to this question, but for the longest time the preferred response has been war or coercion. One system of social organization prevailed over another because it was imposed by force. That this is no longer the case represents an advance of civilization. We no longer kill or reduce to silence those who are not in agreement with us; now we have to convince them. How then can we convince those who adopt other systems of distribution?

My question can be raised with more urgency: according to what criteria do we distinguish between goods that depend on the market and those that do not? The rejection of violence and brute force does not imply the disappearance of antagonisms, of relations of force and conflict. We should try, then, to make explicit the values that underlie this or that choice, and transmit this explanation to public opinion. I detest the word consensus, which, finally, can be made to mean everything and anything, but something very much like it is at stake here: the enlarging of consent through the medium of democracy or some form of compromise. Without such compromise, it is illusory to distinguish "spheres of justice" and the plurality of goods (market or nonmarket), to which you alluded.

But what have we established? That there are no longer any values that are capable of eliciting consensus and imposing limits on the market or the reign of commodities and of money? In the West, medieval society was the last to have an ethical and religious regulation of the economy, through a legitimacy that was extraordinarily powerful because not subject to secular debate. The idea imposed by the church of a "moral economy" crumbled under the assaults of those who enriched themselves, especially the bourgeoisie of the towns. . . .

The drive for accumulation, then, produced a social rapaciousness—all the stronger because the market was a form of freedom and to the extent that there were no more impediments to the ability of the rich and powerful to enrich themselves further—by exploiting the work of others. Socialism was first of all an ethical utopia, the utopia of a radically nonmarket society, corresponding on the level of ideas to, say, Fourierism and on a practical level to all those mutual aid societies, cooperatives, and labor exchanges (*bourses du travail*), which provided hiring structures that avoided the marketing of human beings. In those early years the socialist movement did not envisage bringing into being a society different from the existing system of production but rather constructing something else, alongside it, in the name of a mainly ethical legitimacy, and therefore not in the name of the alleged "direction" of history. Marxist deviations subsequent to this movement resulted in a gigantic defeat, the defeat of the command economy in the communist world, which, in its ruin, has dragged down, for many, the very idea of socialism. This is not the case with me, though not because of any nostalgia or an inability to imagine another model. Along with the early founders of socialism, I call socialism the collective wish for social justice, for less arbitrariness, for a reduction of inequality to a level that corresponds to the distribution of talents, risks, and responsibilities.

Since we are clarifying our respective vocabularies, I would say that in my mind market society, which you have defined in a precise and original manner, is not in contra-

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diction to a wish to create a workable version of what I still call socialism, even with its original aura of utopianism. . . .

P.R.: But doesn't the critique of the administered economy, of bureaucratic "socialism," and even of totalitarianism too often end up extinguishing all social imagination, all visions of social transformation? Doesn't it lead to renouncing the idea of utopia, or even any possible conception of the common good?

I think we have to admit that the critique of the administered economy is over—more precisely, that while the critiques of both totalitarian societies and even the welfare state must be pursued for as long as necessary, it is in a certain sense behind us. Instead, what we need to begin today is a critique of capitalism as a system of distribution that identifies all goods as commodities. If it is true that there is no alternative to democracy, we must not be content with simply opposing a moral discourse to a self-contained economic logic. . . .

An Ethic of Responsibility

M.R.: I am in complete agreement. We must quickly undertake a critique of capitalism in the form you have mentioned. But let us not forget that we have just had a narrow escape. The French Socialist party still partly supported a project of an administered economy in the 1970s. Its failure has aggravated the problem; all legitimacy other than that of the market has been dangerously weakened.

Today, we hear in the East European countries demands for the freeing of the market, for the absolute reign of the economy of money. And when we say that they should not renounce politics, that they should preserve at least a few of the prerogatives of the state, they have the impression that we are dangerous accomplices of the Gulag. Thus it is not only the critique of the administered economy but the reality of it, too, that has blocked the social imagination. What we called the critique of totalitarianism has given rise to a vehement denunciation of political action itself. We saw this in France with people like André Glucksmann,* for whom the individual must henceforth struggle above all against the evils of power and institutions—in short, guard against evil rather than concern oneself with establishing the common good, since in his view the destiny of all utopian projects is to end up with concentration camps. The very idea of political action, then, is vigorously rejected. And I believe that this is not without its effects on the imagination and thinking of young people. Moreover, those like Vaclav Havel, who devised the idea of "antipolitics," are obliged today to accept political action because they are responsible for the fate of their communities.

That said, I am of course searching for new sources of legitimacy other than that of the market. I therefore agree with you that certain types of goods must not be dependent on the market, and others must enter into graduated relations with market forces.

Take one of the greatest problems on the planet today: the environment. We cannot produce without polluting; this an undeniable fact. But when we see the accumulated results of past pollution, we discover damage that is frightful. By what authority can we impose costly measures to preserve the environment? Clearly it cannot be done according to the laws of the market; we have to refer to different values, such as respect for life, for all life, and even more to a projection of this respect into the future. Humanity must make itself capable of protecting and preserving its environment—not only acting for itself but also for the humanity to come. We have here a new human right, or rather a new understanding of human rights: their projection into the future. This responsibility for the future enables us to answer your question about the distribution of goods. There are goods (environment, health, education) that involve the future, and we cannot dispose of them as we please. These goods are precisely the ones that require strict regulation and prohibitions, and also expenditures that the laws of the market alone are not able to justify.

This ethic of responsibility for the future does not stop at the threshold of the market; it

* Ed. Note: A "New Philosopher" of the 1970s who had been a radical in the 1960s.

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is equally valid at the heart of the economic sphere, where too often concern for the long term is sacrificed to the short term. One great weakness of the laws of the market resides in the fact that they suppose, so to speak, a quasi-absolute contemporaneity of actors and moments of exchange; in other words, they are based on the hypothesis that heterogeneous actions must occur all at once, with no regard for time. This denial of time is accompanied by a rejection of concert among actors, of coordinating actions with a view to future consequences. . . . This absence of planning for the future is not unconnected with the decline of conceptions of history in terms of ends or design. Ends, finalities should not always be associated with bad utopias. . . .

From Procedures to Values

P.R.: From this agreement on the idea of a plurality of categories and goods, let us move on to the question of what conception our society can have of itself when we cease to perceive it in terms of the capitalism/socialism cleavage. Now, between liberal individualism, which refuses to accept any idea of a common good, and the desire to renew the *telos* of the ancients, there appears in outline a type of society where the question of goods is posed without necessarily referring to the simplistic antithesis between market and nonmarket. We now conceive of "goods" not as an antithesis between a single Good, in which all individuals partake in indistinct fashion, and a moral individualism that endlessly fragments the conception of the Good. We speak instead of kinds of goods, whose distribution must be organized in the fairest way.

We come to the second part of our inquiry: how to organize a hierarchy of these goods. We cannot accomplish this all at once, but it *ought* to be possible to establish for each epoch and each society an order of priority, as a result of democratic discussion. The question, then, is the following: what values are capable of emerging, beyond simple procedural rules of exchange, that would shape the choice of priorities?

M.R.: The question must be reformulated thus: according to what values do we rank the goods to which we want to give preference? However, today the inquiry is even more ticklish for a politician to the extent that the state has lost a great deal of its legitimacy, and consequently, political action has lost a great deal of credibility for the citizen. Yet this phenomenon is ambiguous insofar as it testifies, at the same time, to an advance in democratic consciousness. The political actor has no choice: to act politically, he must legitimize his action. He not only acts in the name of the sovereign people, he acts in linkage with them, you might say. Hence the necessity of understanding public opinion, of listening to it without embracing it demagogically.

And this is no accident. Democracy is a system in which legitimacy is always in question, always being debated. No one form of legitimacy can definitively win the upper hand because it is always susceptible to challenge. . . . But then the risk is that democracy has no criteria to put forward other than its own procedures. This is what you call the procedural vision of the state, a vision implied by the idea of a society of law. Here I come back to your inquiry into the links between procedures and values. What in fact is the result of such a procedural vision of democracy?

In the first place, values are, so to speak, suspended, put in parentheses. That which is good, that which is bad—how are they to be distinguished in order to evaluate the systems for distributing goods? Can we simply rely on rules of procedure? To these questions we have to bring answers that engage our convictions; procedural rules are not values in themselves. But right now it is difficult to carry on this debate. Either values are seen as things that politics muddles or destroys or else one contents oneself with more or less restrained panegyrics to "communication." It seems to me, first of all, that a certain kind of intellectual, the kind who sanctified Sartre, has veered sharply from ultraleftism and Maoism toward a valueless void, which is part of this concern for procedure. . . .

If you keep referring to values, people regard you as an archaic vestige. For once, it is I who feel archaic here! Because I am not prepared to

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renounce the values that underlie my political activity. There is a paradox here, for at the same time many reproach me for carrying out a politics that is overly cautious, and you have suggested that any reference to socialism is not without ambiguity.

P.R.: It seems, in fact, that one expects the process of discussion itself to make values manifest. Hence the strange situation we are in: on the one hand, politics is blamed for creating an excessive passion for conflict, for being still too bound up with nostalgia and utopianism; and on the other hand, politicians are accused of yielding too much to consensus, of no longer having a specific body of independent ideas, of no longer articulating the values that must weld together a historic community.

In these conditions, the critique of politics is not easy; it quickly becomes a radical indictment of political action itself. Either one is not sufficiently political, or else one is excessively political, which is identical with graft and Machiavellianism . . . .

I fear that speaking in terms of abstract values like liberty, equality, and solidarity merely reinforces an ambivalence with regard to politics. Either it is said that there are no values or else values are affirmed in a purely voluntarist and arbitrary manner. That is why I suggest that we start with the concrete situation, one that's characteristic of modern democracy: namely, the dialectic between conflict and concert. As Edgar Morin has noted, the more complex the society, the more it creates conflicts that are not necessarily conflicts to the death, or civil wars. There are confrontations between divergent interests and between divergent convictions. I would say that democracy is the regime in which all conflicts are open. That is the reason why it requires known and accepted procedures. But accepted on what basis? Procedure is the form of the discussion, but it needs to have a content. Content can only come from conviction, which is another term for enunciating the values that inform our actions. Democracy, one could say, at once demands rules and procedures for arbitrating conflicts and also convictions and values to sustain the procedures of arbitration and to decide among competing values . . . .

M.R.: I am always struck by the curious tropism of the French intelligentsia, which consists of favoring, in a romantic manner, both violence and perspectives a little too apocalyptic for my taste. There is a radical posturing that often borders on the "betrayal of the intellectuals" (*trahison des clercs*). One example: the extraordinary legitimacy among intellectuals that Castro has enjoyed for so long, and which he still seems to enjoy a little compared to the absolute indifference that this same intelligentsia later showed toward the prodigious reconstruction of democracy in post-Franco Spain. In the latter case, there was an unfolding of political intelligence, competence, and mutual respect that made Spain, in a few years, one of the most flourishing and best administered democracies in the contemporary world—and all this, I repeat, in the face of total indifference.

It is convenient to reduce all conflicts to a single conflict and seductive to envisage this conflict as total conflict, like a war. There is an allure to violence that is always dangerously tempting for intellectuals. What is responsible for this? In the French context I think it is useful to recall the old Catholic mistrust of money; money is dirty, and it is not romantic. Rather than engage in conflicts over the distribution of money, one turns to other enthusiasms: nationalism, the class struggle, anti-imperialism. Nevertheless, there are conflicts that urgently need to be brought into the open: the regulation of social welfare and health expenditures, the relationship between television and the market, the treatment of Third World debt, and so on. But then it is necessary to confront the question of money, of the distribution of wealth, which is less exalting than enthusiastic invocations to violence, or the contemporary withdrawal into an irritable skepticism.

From the moment one makes the choice, which we mentioned at the beginning, to renounce violence—that is, to coexist with the adversary—one necessarily enters into the logic of compromise. Those who are scandalized by this situation talk about a "feeble consensus"

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or else are nostalgic for armed conflicts. There is something unseemly about all this, especially when one refuses to discern the real conflicts of today, which revolve around the regulation of money and the redivision of wealth. We must put an end to intellectual oscillation between unanimity and civil war. It's necessary to live with a democratic culture that at once entails compromise, concert, and the reality of conflict.

P.R.: In short, you're saying that we can discern, even in radical critics of Bolshevism, the musty odor of Bolshevism itself, of revolutionary nostalgia. It seems to me that there is a strong tendency in French society for conflict to present itself always in a somewhat archaic form, which makes it unamenable to negotiation and arbitration. . . . We have a lot of trouble acknowledging the proliferation of conflicts and the corresponding necessity of their orderly regularities.

M.R.: From this point of view, I would plead for the reintroduction of a regulative function in the life of our societies. This regulative function has two aspects: one is related to the public authority, to the state, and the other to the contractual regulations of civil society. This latter dimension is very new in French society, because it has always relied on the state. Now, many social processes do not depend on state intervention but on collective negotiation regulated by contracts or agreements. Of course this is the case with social partnerships, but also with institutions, like the medical ethics committee or the *conseil superieur de l'audiovisuel*, even if they do not yet play the role they ought to.

Here I come back to the central line of inquiry. We have at our disposal some procedures, which certainly need to be improved, for arriving at a negotiated treatment of conflicts. But these procedures are not distinct from the values that must underlie them. Now, which values are we likely to favor today? Since we no longer make use of transcendent values, plainly there is no value available to us other than respect for human life. . . .

This idea of respect for human life enables us to link environmental protection, questions of bioethics, and also urgent requirements like economic regulation at the global level. It can also be made the basis for a certain respect for the market, insofar as the market is one of the constitutive elements of freedom. But respect for life also requires respect for the freedom of the other. Questions of values thus are not distinct from questions of procedure, for while there are domains proper to state intervention and those proper to contractual negotiation like the economy, others must be invented from this point of view: bio-ethics for example, and of course health, education, culture, and so on. . . .

P.R.: The absence of transcendent values has been given a name in the French tradition, that of secularism (*laïciser*). And we have tried to make it a value in itself, to make it something positive and substantial. The secularization of the state was thus conceived as a process of putting convictions in parentheses. . . .

In this sense, the legitimacy of the secular state requires no strong conviction. The great struggle for secularization was a struggle to break from a legitimacy founded on tradition and to substitute for it a legitimacy founded on argumentation. . . . We need, once again, to give substance to the idea of a living secularism, one that provides for confrontation between diverse convictions, nourished by the diversity of our cultural heritage, which is for me the Judeo-Christian heritage, that of the Greeks and the Romans, the heritage of the Enlightenment and that of nineteenth-century socialism, to which we must of course add today the Islamic traditions, and perhaps others still. . . .

We have renounced, with good reason, a certain social utopianism, which inspired dreams of a transparent, limpid future, and which ended up legitimizing a totalitarian ideology. But utopianism makes another demand, that of the Harmonious Man (*l'homme réconcilié*), of people no longer prey to fragmentation and division, or alienation. Can we still act without a utopia of this kind, a positive utopia? You have sometimes given the impression of resigning yourself too quickly to the end of ideology and thus renouncing any project for society. But shouldn't some of the ideas that were part of this utopia of a better future be saved?

Translated from the
French by THOMAS B. HARRISON □

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David Moberg

ENVIRONMENT AND MARKETS

A Critique of "Free Market" Claims

The soot-darkened skies and fouled waters of Eastern Europe have given apologists for laissez-faire capitalism a new rallying cry: the "free market," far from being nature's enemy, is the environment's savior.

Some environmentalists have argued that there is no fundamental conflict between environmental responsibility and "free market" economics. Ecology, they contend, is ultimately sound, profitable business and environmental regulation must employ market forces if it is to succeed. They advocate giving businesses more flexibility and incentives, such as the right to buy and sell pollution rights, to increase efficiency and innovation so as to meet environmental goals.

Other environmentalists, however, continue to share a skepticism, with roots in both conservative and leftist traditions, about the compatibility of the market and the environment. This camp is also dissatisfied with the results of the first two decades of environmental regulation. Its advocates want a more aggressive democratic voice in what are usually private decisions. Ecological principles have become the basis for alternative models to capitalist markets, conflicting with or complementing the longstanding social class critiques. Ecologists have also opened another front in criticizing not just the adequacy of market mechanisms but also market society in general and its exaltation of individual acquisitiveness and unbridled growth of commodity production.

All human societies have been shaped by interaction with nature, from the nomadism of hunters to the settled cultures of rich ecological niches, such as our own Northwest Coast or the slash-and-burn agriculture of tropical forests. Although earlier cultures undermined themselves by radically altering environments, stripping forests from the hills of Greece or raising the salinity of irrigated Mesopotamian soil, the worst depredation of the environment has come since the rise of capitalism. Now there is the prospect that human society has such an unsustainable relation with nature that both the future of humanity and the fate of thousands of other creatures is at stake.

But has capitalism itself been the cause of environmental damage or is the root problem industrial technologies or a growing population that consumes more and more goods?

Although the rapid growth of both population and global consumption magnifies every environmental impact, there are huge differences in environmental effects among nations, even the industrialized ones. The worst environmental insults are a result of modern industry, but not all industries degrade the environment equally. The nature of society, not just its size or technology, is largely responsible for the crisis in nature.

Obviously, the private market damages the natural environment because pollution is external to the balance sheets of private business. A factory owner doesn't pay to flush waste down the river or into the air; the costs are borne by nature as well as other people who share the environment. On the other hand, if a farmer preserves a marsh that cleans the stream's water, nourishes fish and wildlife, and prevents floods, he is paid nothing for those services. But if he sells it to be filled in for a shopping center, he will make money, and our accounting system evaluates this as economic growth, with

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no deductions for the loss of the wetland's natural functions. Likewise, nobody pays for the Amazon forest serving as "the lungs of the world" or preserving its diverse life forms for the future. So, the market doesn't adequately account for either negative or positive externalities.

If an ingenious entrepreneur devises a pollution-free production process that costs more than her competitor's, she will probably lose the market race: in most cases, nobody—except for a few generous souls—will pay the tab for her contribution to the common welfare. Now it is possible to level the playing field with taxes, fees, or penalties for the polluter, but it is difficult to assess the price of damage to the environment, especially if it is not a localized toxic spill but a global problem, like the greenhouse effect. Litigation over Exxon's Alaska oil spill or over compensation to the victims of Union Carbide's Bhopal disaster suggests the ethically and economically knotty problems.

Who Determines the Losses?

There are similar problems if more direct environmental regulations are subjected to cost-benefit analysis: how much is a human life worth? Some economists argue that it's the person's likely future lifetime earnings. That makes an Indian peasant pretty expendable compared to a Connecticut executive. Such cost-benefit analyses illegitimately import values of the marketplace to answer questions that arise because of fundamental flaws in that same market system.

How much is a sea otter worth?, *Business Week* asked. Surveying people about how much the animals are worth to them or measuring lost income if sea otters disappeared may keep a few economists employed, but it does not answer the question. If only one respondent said it was of infinite value, that would throw off the survey. If you limit the response to how much a person would be willing to spend, the result would obviously be affected by how much money people have, a standard flaw of market preference analysis.

Nobody asks the sea otter how much otters are worth. But the presumption that humankind's use of the world is the sole measure of its value is arrogant. Nor can anyone survey future generations on their valuations of nature. And trying to measure the environment in terms of clean-up costs makes the neat presumption, easy in economics but questionable in nature, that all processes are reversible.

So, correctly pricing the environmental effects of human activities is at best rough guesswork, an attempt to squeeze profound issues of value into a Procrustean bed of price. Ultimately, despite imported trappings of economic analysis, the decision is social: what does society value?

The market also fails to value adequately the depletion of nonrenewable resources. Again, future generations are largely ignored. How does the market allocate the right of a few generations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to use up most of the world's nonrenewable hydrocarbon resources? For a Brazilian gold miner or peasant, suffering in an economy burdened by huge external debts, short-term market rationality may dictate destroying the forest (just as the short-term rationality of the banks collecting their debts indirectly destroys the forest). But its resources of flora and fauna are lost, its land rendered useless. In different ways, then, the extreme inequities of income generated in the global market exhaust the planet—from the pressure of impoverished Third World masses on the land to the disproportionate consumption of nonrenewable resources and generation of waste in the richest countries.

The marketplace not only poorly accounts for what we dump into the environment but also what we take out. As economist Herman E. Daly and philosopher John B. Cobb, Jr. argue in their book *For the Common Good*, we should count as income only our sustainable production, not our consumption of natural capital (depleted fuels, minerals, or soil, for example) nor our expenditures coping with the negative environmental effects of production.

If we change our calculation of national income to eliminate both eating society's seed corn and dealing with its noxious by-products, our real gains look much more modest. By the

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early 1960s, Daley and Cobb's Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare for the United States diverged from the GNP, no longer growing as fast. By the 1980s, sustainable economic welfare actually declined slightly despite growth in the GNP. If we used our nonrenewable resources not simply to live but also to invest in renewable productive capacity for future generations, they argue, then our use of those resources could be justified. But income, properly speaking, must be sustainable.

Wall Street Journal editorialists growl that "sustainable" economic growth is synonymous with no growth (which, if true, would be a profound indictment of capitalism). When we run out of oil or some other resource, free marketeers argue, then the price will go up and ingenious capitalists will respond with appropriate solutions. Example: as European forests were depleted for charcoal, industry turned to coal. It's true that businesses respond as market conditions change—but not always for the general good. Now that the air in Mexico City is nearly suffocating its residents, private entrepreneurs are peddling breaths of oxygen (this will register in the Mexican economy, although breathing did not count as a growth industry when the air was clean).

Laissez-faire religion rests on the blind faith that maximizing profits will over time yield the most rational results. Yet even within a capitalist framework, farsighted investment at the expense of current profits often makes sense. Critics have charged, with compelling evidence, that the short-term preoccupations of American business have weakened the American economy. With regard to nature, myopic economic calculation is even more devastating. Given the scale and toxicity of human activity today, waiting for the market to signal a need for change may result in catastrophic, even irreversible damage, such as global warming or extinction of valuable species. There is a fundamental conflict, Daly and Cobb argue, between short-term profit maximization and the real needs and concrete resources of the whole community far into the future.

Deferring Gratification

Again, the calculations of the market are inadequate. Economists often discount a future sum of money, figuring its present value as the amount that, if put in the bank at current interest rates, would yield the future sum. For the same reasons that bedevil other efforts to price nature, such discounting fails to assess the future value of the environment. From a free-market perspective, it may be rational for the private owner to kill the goose that lays the golden egg—if it can be sold now for more than its discounted future value and the proceeds invested. But thereby, Daly and Cobb argue, "society has lost a perpetual stream of golden eggs."

When we consider how long certain toxic substances and especially radioactive wastes are likely to remain threats, the problem is compounded: we rob the inheritance of future generations and leave them with a poisonous debt. If future people could be consulted, they would never sign the one-sided contract now being written. We can conclude that for several different reasons the market doesn't accurately price goods so as to take account of their environmental consequences. It ignores negative and positive externalities, ill accounts for depletion of natural resources, inappropriately measures income and welfare, and fails to take responsibility for future generations' welfare.

Since the defense of the market usually rests in large part on its ability to allocate resources efficiently and provide accurate information through prices, this failure to incorporate the environment is not a trifling flaw.

Can it be corrected? Increasingly some environmentalists argue for "green taxes" that would adjust prices upward to include uncounted environmental costs. U.S. energy users don't pay directly for as much as $300 billion a year in subsidies and tax credits (at least $50 billion a year, mainly to fossil fuels and nuclear power), environmental degradation, damage to health, military expenditures (the Gulf War alone would have added approximately $25 a barrel to imported oil), or employment effects of energy policies, according to Harold M. Hubbard, a scientist at Resources for the Future. By other calculations, we should now be paying more than $100 a barrel for oil if all costs were included.

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But Hubbard acknowledges that "calculating the actual cost of energy is not a simple matter. . . . The answers that economists derive may depend as much on social values as they do on analytical solutions to well-defined problems."

If consumers had to pay directly for the full price of energy, several things would happen. First, there would be economic shock and an increase in inequality. In general, the proportion of income spent on energy declines as income increases, although the use of energy increases (at the lowest income levels a decline in car ownership modifies this trend). Then there would be attempts to cope, by cutting back some use (much use is not very discretionary), and then, more important, by increasing efficiency. Also, other energy alternatives would become more competitive. And there would obviously be public clamor to do something—from unleashing nuclear power to promoting solar energy.

U.S. experience after the OPEC price increases of the 1970s illustrates the mixed record on market response to higher energy prices. Because the economy was ill-prepared to absorb the shocks, much of the stagflation of the decade can be attributed to everybody's efforts to pass on the costs to someone else. But the U.S. economy, with some governmental encouragement, also became more energy efficient. In little more than a decade after the first OPEC price increase, the energy intensity of the U.S. economy—energy per unit of GNP—dropped by about one-fourth. Energy production, including new sources of oil, increased in response to higher prices—but far less than mainstream economists predicted.

Much of the efficiency gain was driven by government regulation as well as by market factors. But what's remarkable is how limited the response was, considering the potential. After all, even before the OPEC price hikes, Germany and Japan used roughly half as much energy per unit of GNP as the United States and afterward still made efficiency gains nearly as great or greater than the United States did. Further, using technologies that are commercially available now, the United States could reduce its electric energy consumption by 70 percent at less than the present cost of generating electricity, according to analyses by efficiency guru Amory Lovins's Rocky Mountain Institute. Although the U.S. auto industry, forced by federal standards as much as by prices, made dramatic efficiency gains, the auto industry is still far from realizing the potential of diesel or gasoline engines, not to mention more advanced power sources.

Still, raising the price to some estimated real price would be a clumsy, slow, inequitable way of bringing about needed changes. First, there is nothing intrinsically good—and a lot bad—about high energy prices. What society needs is an inexpensive way to get necessary work done without the externalized costs. The question is: how do we get there in the most socially desirable way?

Will Government Regulation Work?

Direct government intervention is, despite market mania, often the best route. Japanese industries have become leaders in efficiency because "the government spurred their enthusiasm through a carefully coordinated, long-range program that continues even today," the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported. "One clear lesson to learn from Japan is that forcing core industries to become more energy-efficient is one thing that government *can* do well." Other industrialized countries are more energy efficient than the United States because of public investment in their public mass transit systems or because of explicit government strategies, such as Danish support of wind power.

Why hasn't the price of energy—even taking into account the decline in real oil prices in the mid-eighties—spurred more response? Consumers often are ill-informed about alternatives and find it difficult to make lifetime energy cost assessments (cheap initial cost of a regular incandescent bulb is more persuasive than the argument that lifetime costs of an expensive compact fluorescent are lower, for example). Even many industries simply don't understand how energy efficiency can benefit them. They insist that they recover the entire cost of efficiency investments in a year or two, although they might plan on recovering other investments in five years. Sometimes consumers don't directly make decisions: developers or

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landlords may make choices based on their costs, leaving tenants with higher bills.

There are large-scale institutional obstacles to change as well. Automobile manufacturers are to some extent captives of tastes they have created, but like the rest of the auto-oil-highway complex, they have a huge stake in keeping changes incremental—only anticipation of direct governmental edicts on alternatives to gasoline engines is leading manufacturers to gear up for electric vehicles. And private companies are largely incapable of making the kinds of massive investments needed for expanded rail or mass transit.

There are countless other ways in which businesses and consumers would not respond rationally or quickly even to prices that fully reflect environmental costs. Especially in making a major transition, the market is sticky, chaotic, and inefficient. For example, many farmers would like to shift from a less chemically intensive regime, especially as they become aware that it is not only economically viable but much healthier. But making the transition can be too costly—for example, suffering severe losses for several years until alternative controls of pests and weeds begin to work well.

Or take the case of photovoltaic cells, clearly a much-needed technology of the near future. Even though deep-pockets energy corporations bought up solar cell firms in the seventies, U.S. companies have been abandoning the field, in some cases selling off to European firms. This highlights another limit to the market model of efficiency: there are significant cultural differences, especially regarding long-term investment, and differences in levels of government support for alternative energy policies. Both affect market responses.

Regulation Can Help Competition

Free-market enthusiasts insist that private businesses be allowed to innovate in response to market signals. But it is socially undesirable to treat the corporation as a black box, ignoring what goes on inside it and tinkering only with the price signals going in and then coping with what comes out. This is especially true in an era when large, multinational corporations dominate the global economy: their power, size, and internal governance distort idealized market responses to price signals.

Corporate policies vary significantly. At 3M Company, executives wisely instituted its "Pollution Prevention Pays" program and have saved $482 million since 1975, eliminated five hundred thousand tons of waste, and saved another $650 million through energy conservation. But what happens when a company compares polluting and nonpolluting alternatives and calculates that pollution does pay? Or take another example, representing a more familiar route in the eighties. Phillips Petroleum, under pressure of debt incurred in fighting off a hostile takeover, laid off experienced union workers and replaced them with ill-trained contract workers, took shortcuts on safety, and pushed production to the limit. The result was a major explosion in Pasadena, Texas, that killed twenty-six people and spread toxic materials throughout the environment.

Many businesses around the world have become more innovative and competitive as a result of strict environmental regulations. Both Germany and Japan have tougher standards than the United States and are growing faster. Some of the most strictly regulated U.S. industries, such as chemical, synthetics, and fabrics, have gained international competitiveness. Yet many businesses have chosen the path followed by a large segment of southern California's furniture industry: faced with tougher emissions standards, they fled to Mexico, where pollution laws are not enforced.

What makes one company prevent pollution while improving its ability to compete and another company endanger its employees and the surrounding community or flee abroad? Why does one business seize opportunities to become energy efficient and another respond to competitive pressures by shortchanging workers? How these distinct strategies emerge varies, but the general point is that when free marketeers talk about giving businesses flexibility and allowing the market to stimulate innovation, part of the flexibility and innovation will be socially good and part terrible.

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Why let private business make that momentous decision? Why should society wait until after the dirty deed is done to try to clean up the mess?

"Free Trade" Hurts the Environment

International trade raises particularly thorny issues about the environment. In the name of free trade and eliminating market distortions, the United States has tried to impose new trade rules through the GATT—General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—as well as through free-trade agreements with Canada and, now under discussion, Mexico. The general aim is to reduce most subsidies and many regulations that are portrayed as barriers to trade.

In agriculture most governments maintain some kind of subsidies for several reasons: to support the rural social structure, assure national food security, stabilize prices, and protect the environment. Free trade in agriculture is likely to undermine these aims. Considering the environment narrowly, free trade is likely to encourage the further depletion of the soil in major exporting countries like the United States while further impoverishing the peasantry in many less-developed countries.

The United States also wants to prevent any food safety standards that aren't "scientific," a proposal that in practice means setting a lowest common denominator. But this would also minimize any national democratic voice in environmental issues. For example, the United States loudly protested European bans on hormone-fed beef as a trade barrier (although some American beef exporters could have easily met the standard). If the United States succeeds, the setting of environmental and food safety standards will be further removed from popular influence and subordinated to dictates of international trade.

Free trade militates against democratic national control and undermines the role of government. Already with the United States-Canada free-trade agreement, Canadians are protesting U.S. prohibitions against asbestos, a major Canadian resource, as trade-distorting, and the United States has protested British Columbian reforestation programs as trade-distorting subsidies of the Canadian timber industry. Under the GATT rules that the United States is pushing, it might be illegal for individual states to set higher environmental standards, as California voters considered with the "Big Green" initiative. It is possible, of course, for governments to use trade rules to raise standards of countries with lax rules, but the drift will almost certainly be toward restraint of regulation, since the forums of international decision making on trade are relatively insulated from popular pressures and dominated by multinational businesses and banks.

Already a lively international commerce has developed in environmental destruction. Many less-developed countries have for decades mined their natural resources to supply the industrial world without generating sustainable development for themselves. Nigeria exported tropical hardwoods far faster than the trees' rate of renewal. As a result, it is now a net importer of wood products. More recently, the industrialized countries have attempted to export their wastes, especially toxic wastes, to desperate or corruptible Third World countries. By one estimate, corporations from rich countries dumped twenty-four million tons of hazardous wastes in West Africa alone in 1988. For many years, West Germany annually shipped millions of tons of toxic wastes to the corrupt East German regime, a not-so-expedient solution now that West Germany must take responsibility for those dumps.

Two observations: First, the dumping of wastes in poor countries is but an extension of domestic policies: hazardous-waste sites and dumps of all sorts in the United States are concentrated in poor areas, especially near minority communities in the South and Southwest. Environmental danger has long been an unequal opportunity employer. Workers and the poor have long been disproportionately exposed to hazardous substances and pollution. Just as the middle class woke up to the need for public health when urban epidemics began to spread to its neighborhoods, so environmental

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assaults have now become everyone's concern. But these ecological inequities are part of a more general pattern of inequity in income and political power that market economies generate. Second, taking the capitalist world as a whole, and if we include its less-developed portions, market economies do not have such a clear superiority over the dismal record of the communist bloc.

Nightmare of Consumption

Despite our own problems of inequality of consumption, which tear at the social fabric of the United States, an overemphasis on commodity consumption is the industrialized world's environmental nightmare. In mass-consumption societies self-fulfillment is defined in terms of buying more things, which leads to a disproportionate use of the world's resources and contributes to waste crises, from localized conflicts over municipal dumps to global destruction of the ozone layer. Of course, if raw materials were more accurately priced and if corporations were responsible for what happened to the waste they produced, there could be more reusable or at least recyclable packaging and less waste, all without a loss of meaningful consumption.

Environmentalists have contended that we must recognize limits to growth, a most unpopular prospect for both liberals and conservatives. Technically, the limit to a sustainable economy is the amount of solar energy falling on the earth that can reasonably be captured, even though there are much stricter limits on supplies of nonrenewable resources. The specter of global warming or holes in the ozone layer suggests that we could reach the limit of our use of nonrenewable fuels faster than we actually exhaust the earth's resources. Certainly there is no way that the earth can support the spread of wealthy, industrialized nations' current extravagant consumption to the world's poor. Environmentalists are divided over what are the limits to the earth's capacity, but markets have no way of even considering the question: unending growth is both their assumption and goal.

The alternative does not have to be for the richer nations to take vows of poverty. Some of our problems come from relying on the dynamics of commodity production rather than considering what needs we have and how those can be best served. We want homes and offices that are comfortable and well-lighted. But electric utilities want to sell electricity. It would be better for everyone if they devoted their resources to promoting energy efficiency, but they will only do so, in most cases, if they are compensated for part of sales forgone through efficiency-reduced demand. Increasingly, public utility commissions are enforcing such policies, and municipally owned utilities have aggressively pursued this service-oriented alternative because they are not profit oriented.

Environmental concerns should be added to many other motivations—political, philosophical, religious—to challenge the model of "economic man" that market society helps to create. The highly individualistic, cost-minimizing, profit-seeking mentality of market society is not a result of "human nature" but a cultural construction that denies a place for many values and feelings that have appeared in most human societies. True, there are flaky manifestations of new-age spiritualism associated with the environmental movement, but the desire for a sense of human community and harmony with the world is widespread and authentic.

The logic of free-market economics creates untenable abstractions, as Daly and Cobb, following economic historian Karl Polanyi, emphasize. In the laissez-faire market vision, nature becomes land. Then land itself is left out of the calculation, with the assumption that it is interchangeable with humanly created capital. Life becomes labor, or abstract labor-power, and patrimony becomes capital. All values are reduced to prices. Time is not concrete history, incorporating natural biological processes, but rather an infinite series of equivalent seconds. Places with distinctive features disappear into an interchangeable abstract space. By contrast, ecology reminds us that we live in a concrete world, and that we often end up committing real, not just intellectual, violence upon nature, humanity, and history.

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How Do We Deal With Markets?

So what do we do with markets? First, we must put them in their place, and that place is secondary to considerations of social values. The fundamental flaws in the market, from the environmental perspective alone, are enough to undo economists' claims for marketplace superiority. The market needs to be subordinated not only to nature but also to broader human values that form a limiting framework. That requires greater international cooperation. (This is already happening to a small extent with bans on whaling and the ivory trade and international agreements on reducing chlorofluorocarbons.) But ironically it also requires granting nations and communities power to enforce stronger standards to respond to their own local needs without having those undermined in the name of free trade.

Some environmentalists (including the Environmental Defense Fund and a group convened under senators Tim Wirth and the late John Heinz called Project 88) have argued that market-oriented regulations, such as tradable permits for discharges, will achieve environmental goals efficiently. The 1990 Clean Air Act revisions introduce such tradable permits, and the Chicago Board of Trade now plans a futures market in pollution permits. There are numerous objections: such trade *legitimates* pollution, it is likely to disadvantage the poor and powerless (especially if conducted on an international scale), regulatory regimes are already fairly flexible, and markets in such permits may be hard to establish and inefficient. The only evidence for efficiency so far comes from econometric studies already biased towards market solutions. Depending on the prices of permits or the level of taxes imposed, polluters could decide it was still cheaper to pollute.

Even more important, a focus on finding these market solutions diverts us from the main point. Nearly all these regulatory regimes represent attempts to control emissions, but as ecologist Barry Commoner argues in his book *Making Peace with the Planet*, regulatory efforts have at best slowed only slightly the rate of environmental deterioration. The real environmental successes have only come with outright bans of certain substances, such as lead in gasoline or paint. Instead of quibbling over how much toxic substance can be released, regulation should increasingly establish a standard of zero discharge. "The tax [on pollutants] can't work until you've done the wrong thing," Commoner says. "You can't have a market in pollutant rights until you have pollutants." The solution is prevention.

But prevention can't always be outright banning: for the foreseeable future, at least some hydrocarbons will be burned. In many cases, transitions to zero discharge may take time. During that period, using tradable permits or other market-oriented methods should be considered along with flexible regulation. But rather than a panacea, such devices represent an interesting gimmick of unproven value.

What Forces Will Work Best?

There is increased interest in energy or carbon taxes to discourage fossil-fuel use and give better signals on the true costs of burning hydrocarbons, especially nonrenewable sources. Eliminating subsidies to dangerous or polluting sources, such as nuclear power, would also give more appropriate prices.

It's obvious that energy is mispriced and consequently misused, but relying on taxes to bring about a change through the market is likely to create great hardship for low- to middle-income people and increase inequality. Ideally, a transition would not greatly increase energy bills but would increase energy prices steadily in tandem with changes to alternative, renewable energy sources, a different mix of technologies, and greater energy efficiency. If the government developed a strategy for transition to an essentially solar economy, then regular increases in energy taxes could be used for a variety of projects, including research. Federal, state, and local governments can have a tremendous impact: government purchases of solar cells or hydrogen- or electric-powered cars could speed the learning curve and cut prices quickly. Public investment would be needed to develop mass transit and railroads. A full-scale industrial extension service to promote energy efficiency and nonpolluting tech-

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nologies could speed industrial transitions with less disruption. But if energy taxes are going to work most effectively, it should not be simply through the indirect effect of higher prices but also through the investment of the new revenue in efficiency and alternatives.

Green consumerism and protest already have had some impact. McDonald's, responding to a campaign against its styrofoam clamshell, has switched packaging and is considering composting of its food wastes. Other businesses sense a good market, although many are as duplicitous as Mobil Chemical, whose representative said its "biodegradable" plastic trash bags "are not an answer to landfill crowding or littering. . . . Degradability is just a marketing tool. . . . We're talking out of both sides of our mouths because we want to sell bags." Green consumerism is an important phenomenon but is likely to remain marginal without other reinforcing measures.

There must first be clear public policy. A mixture of direct government actions (purchases, subsidies, prohibitions, research, and technical assistance) can be combined with changed market incentives (for example, taxes and markets in efficiency) in ways that complement each other. Public policy, however, should determine the direction.

The disastrous effects of centralized government control in the communist countries should remain a reminder that government is no guarantee of virtue. Clearly government in the United States and elsewhere has often been the captive of corporate interests. Environmental values, like other values, must be cultivated among the electorate if public policy is going to change. In the long run, altering the "economic man" outlook of market society will make environmental goals easier to attain.

Much of the progress toward environmental sanity in the United States has come as a result of grass-roots protest, environmental impact fights, and legal action over local issues. Often dismissed as NIMBYism—not-in-my-backyard—these movements are often concerned about other backyards as well. Even now the grass-roots protesters among environmentalists exert pressure on the bigger, established environmental groups that are entrapped in the rulemaking squabbles of federal legislation and tempted to form alliances with big corporations (at times having an influence, yet also subtly losing their independence).

Besides guaranteeing a free and full role for citizen protest, which big corporations especially want to eliminate, it is important that workers have broad powers to influence the safety and health of their work environment. Like the proverbial canaries in coal mines of the past, they are the first victims of pollution and toxicity. Giving them powers to protect themselves, with mandated worker health and safety committees in every workplace, protects everyone else.

Environmental values lead to a model of society that subordinates the market to nature, but environmentalists cannot claim nature as their model any more than the free marketeers can call their model "natural." No model of society is natural; all are historical, cultural creations. And nature itself has forever been altered by human culture.

A new model of society can aspire to respect nature and to make culture and nature as compatible as possible. The implications of the environmental critique go beyond traditional ecological issues. Many similar critiques of the market can be made on behalf of other cultural values. The market, for example, does not take into account the externalities of human poverty and inequality, economic dislocation, stunted work lives, and destruction of community. It gives the wrong price signals, the wrong information. In taming the market to protect nature, we should not forget the well-being of those most curious natural creatures—ourselves. □

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Martin Kilson and Clement Cottingham

THINKING ABOUT RACE RELATIONS

How Far Are We Still From Integration?

Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, W.E.B. DuBois argued that the color line would remain the distinguishing feature of American civilization. At the center of this observation was a proposition about the character of modern American society—namely, that American whites (regardless of religious and ethnic attributes) have a psychocultural investment in the racial-caste demarcation between themselves and Afro-Americans. Above all, this racist attitude toward blacks offers a convenient yardstick by which any white group, regardless of its class position, could experience a ready-made "status elevation" within American society.

After all, why did Italians, Jews, Irish, Poles, Germans, and so on, come to America if not to achieve ready-made status elevation? This, alas, is the mythical essence of the "American Dream." So, as twentieth-century America became industrialized, it was the racist stigmatizing of Afro-Americans (at all levels of American life) that gave white Americans an easily perceived status elevation.

This increase in status, when measured in terms of living and working standards, remained elusive for the vast majority of whites (whether "redneck" WASPs or Catholic proletarians) from the 1880s through the Second World War.[1] However ephemeral it was, this perceived status elevation was psychoculturally very real. Thus the politics of whites was invested heavily in sustaining the psychocultural benefits that rested on a racist foundation. As V.O. Key demonstrated in *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949), race-baiting and race-scapegoating have been prominent in twentieth-century electoral politics. And, as Kevin Phillips has persuasively argued, the conservative tilt in presidential electoral politics since the 1890s is closely linked to racist appeals.[2]

It is hardly surprising, then, that George Bush in 1991 (like his Republican predecessors Nixon and Reagan) is cynically trafficking in racist politics when he claims that the proposed 1992 Civil Rights Act is a "quota bill"—a term described in a *New York Times* editorial as a "scare word." In "backlashing" the Civil Rights Act,[3] which is an attempt to close the mobility gap between blacks and whites, President Bush, and conservative politicians generally, are directing white voters to pay more attention to how blacks might benefit than to their own needs, such as declining housing opportunities, declining working-class and middle-class wages, massive job losses in manufacturing, and so on.[4]

Of course, policy benefits for Afro-Americans are not the only victims of the assault on federal assistance. Conservative middle-class voters have favored politicians and presidents who scapegoated assistance programs for the white ethnic working class that came out of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations—especially policies relating to strikes and to trade unions.[5] Some policies for farmers have occasionally fallen prey to backlashes, too, though it is a fascinating feature of American political culture that from, say, Woodrow Wilson's farm programs to today's, no other constituency has benefited as much as farmers from federal assistance.[6] Compared with the white working class and farmers, Afro-Americans have possessed at best an uncertain legitimacy as a federally fostered constituency.

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Policies targeted toward Afro-Americans have been consistently attacked and disrupted.

It should also be noted that all white groups—in varying degrees—have contributed throughout this century to explicitly extrademocratic methods of reinforcing their psychocultural investment in the racial-caste marginalization of Afro-Americans. These include cultural denigration and violence, which were pervasive throughout the first half of the twentieth century, resulting in thousands of deaths, maiming, and—perhaps as bad or worse—the psychological trauma inflicted on millions. Though it is common for white Americans who oppose affirmative assistance for Afro-Americans to protest that their ethnic group did not participate in racial-caste oppression, data in Table 1 puts the lie to this argument. As Arnold Hirsch observed, these violent anti-black housing riots revealed a "liberal mixture of white 'ethnics' [who] seemed content to live in close proximity to each other, but not in similar proximity to blacks."

Even today, in 1991, after nearly thirty years of change in the social condition of most Afro-Americans,[7] black homes in a suburban community or in a mainly white urban neighborhood are subject to violence. Such acts virtually never happen to the homes of Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans, or Polish-Americans. Curiously, only the suburban homes of Jewish-Americans—despite their unmatchable upward mobility—are still, among white groups, targets of violence by other whites.

Although incidence of antiblack violence has changed fundamentally from one or two generations ago, the forms have not. Police brutality remains extensive; violent acts against the homes of blacks continue, as do verbal denigration and violent assaults against individual blacks. Consider, for instance, the assaults within the last couple of years by Italian youth against black males in New York City's Howard Beach and Bensonhurst sections. Consider, too, the event in June 1991 in the Atlantic Beach section of New York—a baseball-bat assault, with murderous intent, on a black high-school student (a football captain) who was talking to a neighborhood white girl. Italian, Jewish, and Irish youth participated in this assault. Of course, blacks, who once were not known to engage in racist violence, now participate in violence against whites. The fact remains that white violence against blacks has a systemic aura about it.

The strong need among many white Americans for psychocultural "status elevation" that

TABLE I
ETHNICITY OF ARRESTEES BY PERCENTAGE AND RIOT

Ethnicity	Fernwood Park 1947 (N = 113)	Park Manor 1949 (N = 18)	Englewood 1949 (N = 29)	Trumbull Park 1953–4 (N = 109)	Calumet Park 1957 (N = 51)	Total (N = 320)
Anglo	22.4	35.3	16.6	13.6	22.4	19.6
Irish	7.7	25.5	51.2	19.6	18.4	18.2
Slav	4.4	0.0	6.0	25.5	14.5	13.0
Italian	6.5	25.5	0.0	12.0	7.9	9.0
Polish	5.3	0.0	0.0	10.7	16.4	8.2
Southeastern Europe	6.2	0.0	1.2	6.9	4.6	5.5
Dutch	26.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.4
German	14.7	9.8	22.6	5.7	3.3	10.3
Scandinavian	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	2.1
Jewish	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.2
Spanish (surnamed)	0.0	3.9	2.4	4.7	10.5	3.7
Other	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.7	0.7
Total	99.9	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0	99.9

SOURCE: Arnold Hirsch, "The Black Struggle for Integrated Housing in Chicago," in Melvin Holli and Peter Jones, eds. *Ethnic Chicago* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Co., 1984), p. 398.

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is rooted in America's racist legacy continues to characterize race relations in America. Nevertheless, the structure of race relations—what we call its sociopolitical ecology—is different today from two generations ago.

A New Sociopolitical Ecology of Race

The structure of race relations today is defined by new social formations, political patterns, and attitudes. Yet the thrust of the new sociopolitical ecology of race relations does not add up to a racially integrated society. Why? Because (1) the overall range and caliber of black/white societal interaction is not sufficient and (2) the extent of equality for Afro-Americans is inadequate.

The second condition for a racially integrated American society—black equality—is, of course, subject to debate. Conservative analysts tend to divide the structure of opportunity from the structure of integration, while liberal and leftist analysts see these as closely intertwined. Progressive analysts favor governmental and private-sector affirmative assistance policies in order to expand and strengthen Afro-American opportunity. Many conservatives, however, do not see Afro-Americans as true victims of America's oppressive heritage because the civil rights policies enacted in the 1960s outlawed racial-caste practices and so ushered in a nonracist or colorblind epoch—a level playing field of mobility and opportunity for Afro-Americans.

This seriously misguided viewpoint is prominently articulated by neoconservative observer Joseph Epstein, editor of *The American Scholar*. In an article in the *New York Times Magazine* (July 2, 1989) titled "The Joys of Victimhood," Epstein mocks the notion of blacks-as-victims. "What are you supposed to do," Epstein asks, "if someone blames you for slavery, a hideous institution, to be sure, but one defunct for more than a century? Say you are sorry it ever happened? Should you clear your throat and announce that there are historical reasons for some of these things?"

We dare say Epstein and other neoconservatives would not indulge in this unseemly wordplay regarding the vicious history of anti-Semitism in the West and the Holocaust. Why, then, such a shallow intellectual posture toward America's racist heritage—a heritage steeped in violence, murder, and mayhem? Have New Right intellectuals lost all sense of decency when treating Afro-Americans' concerns? It takes a curious mindset to deny to Afro-Americans their status as victims given America's racial-caste heritage.

Indeed, it is a sign of our neoconservative times that there is a lot of this twisted comment on matters of Afro-American concern. For instance, the political scientist Andrew Hacker made the following comment to a *New York Times* correspondent about the virtual absence of Afro-American doormen at New York's upper-middle class and elite apartment buildings and hotels. "It is," said Hacker, "what I sometimes hate to call rational racism in the sense that given the givens, there is some rationality behind it." As the reporter explained, by the term "givens" Professor Hacker was referring to how whites perceive the impact on their property value of doormen from a group associated with high rates of crime.[8] Now, this comment—from a prominent intellectual—with its implication that the criminality of a minority of black males can be construed as representing Afro-American behavior generally, is outright defamation. But—and this is the main point—Hacker would not dare make a similar (and "logically analogous") comment suggesting that, given the dominant role of Italian-American males in organized crime, our banks, insurance companies, and retail firms would be acting "rationally" by limiting the hiring of Italians. In our conservative era, it is open season on black folks, even among decent people.

Of course, a major omission in discourse on race is the failure (or refusal) to place America's racist legacy in historical context. Forty-four years ago, in *Inside U.S.A.*, John Gunther did what so few commentators do. Remarking on the life experiences of a typical middle-class southern black, Gunther writes:

> He is too proud to go to a Jim Crow theater; therefore he can scarcely ever see a first-run movie, or go to a concert. If he travels in a day coach he is herded like an animal into a villainously decrepit wooden car. If he visits a friend in a suburb, he will find that the water,

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> electricity, and gas may literally stop where the segregated quarter begins. He cannot as a rule try on a hat or a pair of gloves in a white store. . . . And at a bus terminal or similar point he will, of course, have to use the "colored" toilet, and drink from a separate water fountain. He is expected to give the right of way to whites on the sidewalk, and he will almost never see the picture of a fellow Negro in a [white] newspaper, unless of a criminal. His children must attend a segregated school. . . . When they grow up, no state university in the South will receive them. . . . The basic pattern of segregation in the South is unwavering and absolute, though minor modifications come from time to time. . . . [Segregation] has manifestations all the way from the laws prohibiting intermarriage to such taboos as that which commonly forbids a Negro to argue with a white man.[9]

Clearly, the racial-caste heritage was massive, extensive, and intricately intertwined at virtually every societal level. Although this system was formally outlawed in the late 1960s, it is impossible to believe that in just a few decades we could see a colorblind society, a level playing field. To claim that discrimination has ended is sheer distortion: it confuses and disorients. Adopted by three Republican administrations, articulated by numerous conservative intellectuals who are extensively aided by wealthy foundations (Olin, Heritage, Richardson Sciafe, American Enterprise, and so on), and propagated by many mainstream magazines (such as the *Atlantic, Harper's,* and *Time*), this level–playing field view of race relations serves to reduce attitudinal and voter support among white Americans for federal affirmative assistance policies that would close the black/white mobility gap.

Nonetheless, even as we discount the level–playing field view of race relations, we believe that federal legislation outlawing racial-caste practices and federal affirmative assistance policies for promoting Afro-American social mobility have ushered in a transitional integrationist sociopolitical ecology. Though the federal affirmative assistance policies have been significantly reduced during the Reagan-Bush years (a recent *Newsweek* poll shows 53 percent of whites saying there is "enough legislation"; 64 percent of blacks and 35 percent whites say "more legislation is needed"), the basic ingredients of what we call a transitional integrationist ecology are now in place.

The main result of a transitional integrationist milieu has been the growth of a sizable Afro-American middle class. When we add to this middle class the stable Afro-American working class, there is now in place in black society a majority of families inhabiting what we call the "coping-strata." The growth (1940–1980) in upper and middle occupations

TABLE II
SELECTED WHITE-COLLAR OCCUPATIONS FILLED BY BLACKS, 1940–1980

	Number (Percent)									
Occupation	1940		1950		1960		1970		1980	
Managerial	62,220	(33.2)	112,020	(37.5)	121,762	(25.7)	170,035	(21.8)	487,432	(31.1)
Self-employed	49,760	(26.5)	73,560	(24.6)	63,357	(13.4)	34,893	(4.5)	21,781	(1.4)
Private salary	10,940	(5.8)	32,580	(10.9)	44,318	(9.3)	87,765	(11.2)	282,488	(18.1)
Government	1,240	(0.7)	5,250	(1.8)	12,282	(2.6)	46,388	(5.9)	181,847	(11.6)
Professional and technical	125,300	(66.8)	186,930	(62.5)	352,298	(74.3)	611,334	(78.2)	1,077,482	(68.9)
Clergy	17,290	(9.6)	19,110	(6.4)	14,530	(3.1)	12,850	(1.6)	16,195	(1.0)
Engineers	300	(0.2)	2,730	(0.9)	12,049	(2.5)	13,679	(1.8)	36,019	(2.3)
Lawyers and judges	1,000	(0.5)	1,530	(0.5)	2,970	(0.6)	3,728	(0.5)	15,277	(1.0)
Physicians	4,160	(2.2)	4,500	(1.5)	9,983	(2.1)	6,106	(0.8)	13,509	(0.9)
Social workers	2,720	(1.5)	6,750	(2.3)	15,345	(3.2)	40,791	(5.2)	88,512	(5.6)
Teachers	67,660	(36.0)	90,180	(30.2)	150,743	(31.8)	240,073	(30.7)	424,755	(27.1)
Total	187,520	(100.0)	298,950	(100.0)	474,060	(100.0)	781,369	(100.0)	1,564,914	(100.0)

SOURCE: Gerald Jaynes and Robin Williams, *A Common Destiny: Blacks And American Society* (Washington, 1989), p. 170.

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is shown in Table II. The number and proportion of black families that now make up the majority of Afro-American households falling within the "coping-strata" (middle class and stable working class) are shown in Table III. That some two-thirds of Afro-American families fall occupationally within the "coping-strata" is still not fully recognized. According to Census Bureau data, this trend continued to expand in the late 1980s. Of 10,486,000 Afro-American households in 1989, some 264,000 earned between $50,000 and $54,999; 92,000 earned more than $70,000; and 81,000 earned more than $100,000.

What is crucial about the role of coping-strata blacks in a transitional integrationist milieu is that, given whites' deep-rooted anxiety in regard to black/white relationships, it is logical to assume that bourgeois and stable blue-collar Afro-Americans possess societal attributes that should reduce this anxiety. We can also assume that, as coping-strata Afro-Americans expand their influence through the emerging black political class (now comprising nearly 8,000 elected officials), white Americans will slowly but in increasing numbers interact with an expanding black influence.

At the center of the black political class is a congressional delegation of twenty-four Afro-Americans. The black congressional delegation now has a high seniority index, which translates into enormous legislative clout. In due course, white politicians will increasingly combine their white voters' policy interests with the concerns of the black political class.

It should also be noted that differences within the black political class are producing a slow but steady metamorphosis of what might be called transracial black politicians, that is, politicians who are black but owe their election to white voters (a variant, in effect, of transethnic white politicians, like Jewish politicians who owe election to Gentile voters). Transracial or crossover black congressmen already exist (for example, Allan Wheat, Mo.; Ron Dellums, Calif.; Gary Franks, Conn.), and there are transracial black mayors now in Seattle, Los Angeles, Denver, and New Haven. Virginia has a transracial black governor.

Thus, with over two-thirds of Afro-American households marked by some bourgeois societal patterns and with about two-thirds of black families having political participation rates comparable to middle-class white voters, one can say that important possibilities for integrationist race relations are evolving. This potential is suggested by survey data from a *Newsweek* poll (April 1991 and reported in the May 6, 1991 issue). Some 84 percent of blacks report that they "work with many members of another race" (51 percent whites report the same), and only 17 percent of blacks say they are "uncomfortable working with members of another race." Also, some 63 percent of blacks report they "socialize regularly with members of another race."

The readiness of "coping-strata" Afro-Americans for integration is also suggested in a 1988 *Newsweek* poll (reported March 7, 1988) on racial attitudes. When asked whether blacks' interactions with whites should be lessened in order "to improve their situation," some 61 percent of blacks said no. This poll also revealed that 48 percent of blacks believed that black children did "better" in "racially mixed schools," while only 6 percent felt they did "worse" (41 percent said "no difference").

TABLE III
SOCIAL-CLASS STRUCTURE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES, 1969–1986

	1969		1983		1986	
	Families	%	Families	%	Families	%
Upper Class	143,000	3	267,000	4	624,000	9
Middle Class	1,100,000	25	1,500,000	25	1,910,000	27
Working Class Nonpoor	2,100,000	44	2,400,000	36	2,420,000	34
Working Class Poor	688,000	14	963,000	14		
Underclass Nonworking Poor	716,000	14	1,500,000	23	2,142,000	30

SOURCE: Andrew Billingsley, "Understanding African-American Family Diversity," in *The State of Black America 1990* (National Urban League, New York, 1990).

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An even stronger indication of readiness among "coping-strata" Afro-Americans for expanding integration can be gleaned from data shown in Table IV. Some 68 percent of Afro-Americans favor a racially mixed neighborhood, while only 8 percent prefer a mostly black pattern. And, finally, a 1988 Harris Poll (reported in *Business Week*, March 14, 1988) asked a sample of 531 Afro-Americans, "Do you think that during the 1980s American society has become more or less racist?" Thirty-seven per cent of blacks said "more racist," but 54 percent of blacks said "less racist" (70 percent of whites said "the same").

Pitfalls of Integration

If one derived one's understanding of obstacles to integration from the print and television media, the names of Rev. Al Sharpton (a black Pentecostal clergyman in New York) and Minister Louis Farrakhan (a Black Muslim leader) would loom large. New York City has produced more figures like these two militant ethnocentric Afro-American leaders than any other major city. Why? Because, for one thing, blacks in New York have a tradition of generating militant ethnocentric or black nationalist leaders, extending back to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association in the early 1920s.

Second, the white power structures in New York City—especially the Democratic and Republican parties—extended their resources for the political incorporation of white ethnic groups (like Italians and Jews) some forty years earlier than they did for Afro-Americans. In short, the white power structures treated blacks with "benign neglect." The political vacuum that remained was filled mainly by "client type" black politicians, who were primarily dependent upon white politicians for their resources, not upon forging viable black voter and interest-group constituencies.[10]

TABLE IV
ATTITUDES TOWARD NEIGHBORHOOD RACIAL COMPOSITION

Type of Neighborhood	Whites	Blacks
Mostly Black	0%	8%
Mostly White	33%	2%
Half & Half	46%	68%

SOURCE: *Newsweek* (March 7, 1988) p. 23.

But this political vacuum was both too extensive and lasted much too long—a couple of generations. So the Rev. Sharpton and Minister Farrakhan picked up the leadership slack. Functionally speaking, they cater to the cluster of left-out working-class and poor blacks (some in the middle-class, too) best described as the disenchanted. The main political appeal directed to the black disenchanted sector is militant ethnocentrism or black nationalism. This translates into an aggressively pro-black and anti-white (often anti-Jewish, too) political concoction.

Though the print media and television have given disproportionate attention to leaders of the black disenchanted, the fact of the matter is that the politics of the black disenchanted form a minority strand—an ethnocentric subplot in the pragmatic electoral "mainplot" of Afro-American politics. The Sharpton-type subplot is a sideshow—a variant of what Daniel Boorstin has called pseudo-event politics (that is, media-hyped politics). Its organization is sporadic, crisis driven, lacking a viable voter base among blacks. The effort by neoconservative analysts to equate the Sharpton-type strain in Afro-American politics with the black leadership mainstream is analytically cockeyed and intellectually dishonest.

Even so, this ethnocentric subplot does reinforce racial cleavages. Or, rather, it offers white voters who are already indifferent to serious transracial electoral coalitions with blacks a basis for New Right political inclinations.

These conservative proclivities among white working-class voters antedated the rise of Sharpton-type ethnocentric politics. After all, when mainstream black leaders were seeking to extend the benefits of the mid-1960s civil rights legislation, the white working-class in metropolitan areas did not welcome this opportunity to forge transracial coalitions. Jonathan Rieder's book *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (1985) contributes to this erroneous view of a transracially minded bloc of white voters in the late 1960s and mid-1970s who were betrayed by insensitive

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liberals (pushing too much integrated housing) and militant black ethnocentrists. Jim Sleeper's *The Closest of Strangers* (1990) also argues this view of a sizable urban white working-class (and middle-class) voter bloc ready for transracial coalitions but betrayed by liberals and black ethnocentrists. This is plain wrong.

At the heart of Sleeper's book is a basic analytical flaw. Sleeper offers a keen evocation of the communal world of New York City's white ethnic neighborhoods—and others too—projecting them in nearly aesthetic terms as an intricate labyrinth of what might be called ethnic caring networks. But these ethnic neighborhoods so deftly portrayed also have hidden agendas, which is to say social and political purposes. Sleeper would have his readers believe these are intrinsically valid, that they provide their own internal rationale and cannot be gauged by mundane yardsticks brought in by outsiders called liberal intellectuals, liberal Democratic politicians, social engineers, civil rights leaders, and so on. In short, for Sleeper the purposes of white ethnic neighborhoods (caring networks) are a kind of timeless gestalt.

We question this argument. In reality, the power agendas of white ethnic neighborhoods in New York are contextual and changeable, that is, they are opportunistic, like everybody else's agendas. Historically, urban white ethnic neighborhoods were not ethnically homogeneous but were made up of a mixture of ethnic proletarians—Mafia and gangs included—from the 1890s onward, as Theodore Hershberg's and Dennis Clark's data on Philadelphia show. But suddenly, from the early 1960s onward, white enclaves mount a *communal protectivistic neighborhoodness*, so to speak, just when black proletarians (and even some bourgeois blacks) bid for entry. As Arnold Hirsch has observed apropos Chicago during this same period, "White ethnics . . . seemed content to live in close proximity to each other, but not in similar proximity to blacks."[11] Nor does Sleeper's analysis let us know that white ethnic neighborliness in New York was excluding blacks from housing stock, a good part of which was provided directly and indirectly through federal public policy.

Thus we question Sleeper's attack on liberal intellectuals, social engineers, Democratic politicians, and civil rights leaders who seek to resist and reverse this patently racist exclusion of Afro-Americans from white ethnic neighborhoods in the 1960s–1980s era and today too. Faced with white enclaves' communal protectivist neighborhoodness, Sleeper's preferred politics is not liberal or progressive opposition but a neighborhood-based black uplift politicization, some of which went on in Brooklyn. Had this happened more broadly, Sleeper suggests, the white ethnic neighborhoods (those caring networks), automatically well-intentioned toward black folk, would have slowly but surely worked out a coalescing symbiosis with black New York.

Sleeper seems to have forgotten the Wallaceite movement's massive appeal to these ethnic neighborhoods in the late 1960s through early 1970s and later Nixon's equally race-baiting, backlash appeal. The Sleeper argument, in short, is both mistaken and naive, and certainly not progressive. He offers not a clue as to what intervening structural or normative variables (a Christian crusade perhaps?) would enable the white working class and lower middle class in Howard Beach, Canarsie, Bensonhurst, Atlantic Beach, and so on, to arrive at his presumed symbiotic interplay with black New York. The Sharpton-type leadership among blacks did not cause the race-baiting conservatism among white ethnics; it merely offered a reinforcing rational to an already established conservatism among white voters in New York (and elsewhere too)—voters still not ready by the late 1960s and early 1970s for moderate advances in integration.

Contrasting Attitudes On Racial Equality

A crucial feature of the integrationist role of mainstream Afro-American leadership is its insistence that elevating the status of the black poor must be an integral part of achieving racial equality generally. From a liberal and progressive perspective, this goal is morally correct. It is also politically difficult. This

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difficulty is rooted ultimately in America's racial-caste heritage, but it is also affected by the intricate character and scale of black poverty. Black poverty involves, among other things, statistics like the following:

- thirty-one percent of black households in poverty
- high unemployment rate and low labor-force participation of the black working class (under 50 percent for males under age 30)
- forty-two percent of prison inmates are black
- sixty-three percent of black births are to unwed mothers
- forty-two percent of black children live in poverty; and some 62 percent of black children in female-headed households are poor
- fifty-seven percent of black families are female-headed and the majority of these families are poor
- sixteen percent of blacks aged sixteen to twenty-four drop out of school (27 percent for Hispanics)
- inner-city black areas have the highest crime rates and highest homicide rate, with young males dying at rates higher than in the Vietnam War

Many Afro-Americans explain both black poverty and the black/white social differential in terms of the racial-caste heritage. As shown in Table V, a series of *ABC News/Washington Post* polls between 1981 and 1989 revealed Afro-Americans overwhelmingly using two variants of a racial-caste heritage explanation for the differential in black/white social mobility. In one poll, between 1981 and 1989 well over 60 percent consistently explained this as "mostly due to discrimination"; and in another poll well over 70 percent explained that "many whites don't want them to get ahead."

Typically there is a sharp discrepancy between black and white views on race-related causes of the mobility gap. Data from *ABC News/Washington Post* polls covering 1981–1989 show that in 1981 only 6 percent of whites said that Afro-Americans are discriminated against in "getting an education" compared to 35 percent of blacks who said discrimination (racism) prevailed. In 1981 some forty-two percent of blacks saw discrimination in "getting decent housing," but only 16 percent of whites. In "getting skilled jobs," some 56 percent of blacks saw discrimination but only 19 percent whites. And, last, in "getting managerial jobs," some 57 percent of blacks saw discrimination but only 22 percent of whites.[12] Polls in 1989 yielded similar results.

There has emerged a kind of explanatory standoff between blacks and whites regarding race relations. White responses imply signifi-

TABLE V
PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK/WHITE MOBILITY GAP 1981–1989

Question: Most people agree that on the average blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than whites. Do you think the differences are:

	Blacks 1981	Blacks 1986	Blacks 1989	Whites 1981	Whites 1989
Mainly due to discrimination?					
Yes	67	64	69	38	46
No	27	31	29	58	52
Don't know/no opinion	6	5	1	4	2
No answer/refused	0	1	0	0	0
Black people are not achieving equality as fast as they could because many whites don't want them to get ahead					
Agree	74	76	75	46	43
Disagree	20	18	20	47	52
Don't know/no opinion	6	5	5	7	5
No answer/refused	0	1	0	1	0

SOURCE: Lee Sigelman and Susan Welch, *Black Americans' Views of Racial Equality* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), p. 91.

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cant movement toward equality of opportunity for blacks; black responses imply some, but not adequate, movement toward equal opportunity. There are, however, some objective measures for judging these differences.

For example, we get some insight from a 1980 census study of housing patterns in sixteen metropolitan areas with the largest Afro-American populations. The housing was rated on a scale of zero to a hundred. The top figure of one hundred meant total segregation and zero meant that all people were randomly distributed. Using 1970 data as a baseline, the census analysis revealed a black average segregation index of eighty, which was some six points lower than the 1970 index, a decline that was notable historically but still meant a high segregation of Afro-Americans. This study also compared blacks with Hispanics and Asian-Americans and found that "if the historically high 1970s pace of reduction in black-white index segregation were to persist, it would take about 60 years for the black-white index to fall to the values currently observed for Hispanic and Asian-Americans."[13]

Data on patterns in school desegregation, like data on housing patterns, suggest that the civil rights legislation of the 1960s has had a less than adequate outcome. As of 1980, in the United States as a whole, some 36 percent of black students were attending public schools with 90 percent or more minority students and 64 percent of black students were attending schools with 50 percent or more minority students. In an evaluation of the overall status of school desegregation as of 1980, a study by the National Academy of Sciences observed that

> [t]he major achievements in school desegregation occurred between 1966 and 1973. Court decisions and demographic trends [white flight] since that time have limited or halted the desegregation of schools. . . . By 1980, whites made up only 4 percent of the public school enrollment in Washington, 8 percent in Atlanta, 9 percent in Newark, and 12 percent in Detroit. Residential segregation was high in the 29 metropolitan areas that contained one-half of the country's black population in 1980. The central city school districts of just two of these areas had a majority white enrollment in 1980: the countywide districts that included Jacksonville and Greensboro. Major reductions in school segregation would require the pooling of central city and suburban students, but Supreme Court decisions disallowing metropolitan desegregation plans in Detroit and Richmond have made this unlikely (*Millikin* v. *Bradley* 1974).[14]

Another fascinating finding presented in the National Academy of Sciences' study of school desegregation is that, on balance, black pupils who had formative school years in desegregated schools had a more successful rate of mobility trajectory:

> Black pupils who begin to attend schools with whites in the first or second grade differ systematically from their randomly selected age-mates who attend segregated schools. An extensive longitudinal study in Hartford, Connecticut (begun in 1966), found that students who had the interracial experience, in comparison with those who remained in segregated schools, have higher test scores and high school graduate rates, are more likely to attend predominantly white colleges and are more likely to graduate from college. Also, as adults, they were less likely to be involved in police incidents, less likely to perceive discrimination, more likely to live in non-segregated residential areas, and more likely to have frequent social contacts with whites (p. 80).

The findings relating to greater mobility and greater transracial patterns for integrated Afro-American school children contrast sharply with transracial marital data. These data imply a continuing reluctance by whites to marry Afro-Americans. Thus by 1960 there were about 65,000 black-white marriages, and in 1980 there were around 350,000—a significant increase, to be sure, but this represented less than 1 percent of Afro-American marriages.

Concluding Note

Conservative elements in the media have inordinately highlighted events associated with militant ethnocentrists or racialists among black intellectuals and students, implying that this aggressively antiwhite group reflects mainstream Afro-American patterns. It is a rather

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cynical attempt to smear the mainstream black leadership with an extremist characterization, thereby weakening its image and integrationist role.

Survey data do not support these neoconservative claims. Data from a National Academy of Science 1980 survey shown in Table VI suggest a reasonably moderate and pragmatic level of problack orientations. Some 58 percent of blacks replied "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to the statement: "Blacks should always vote for black candidates when they run"; some 58 percent also replied "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to the statement: "Black women should not date white men"; and, finally, some 56 percent of blacks replied "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to the statement: "Black men should not date white women." We know of no data on these and related ethnic-ingroup issues covering Jewish, Italian, WASP, and other white groups that report as strong a cosmopolitan or integrationist orientation.

We suggest that the state of race relations over the past thirty years has evolved beyond the rigid marginalization of Afro-Americans that prevailed before the 1960s civil rights legislation. Through a new middle class and stable working class, Afro-Americans have gained broad categories of skilled jobs and managerial jobs. There is a new deghettoized black bourgeoisie. Through a new black political class, Afro-Americans have likewise penetrated to politically powerful positions in American cities, counties, states, and the federal government.

There has also been a significant black presence in activist and lobbying organizations relating to issues commonly considered of major concern to women—issues like child care and general well-being of children, abortion rights, and family planning. For example, an Afro-American woman, Marian Wright Edelman, heads the Children's Defense Fund, the major children's lobby in the country, and Faye Wattleton, also an Afro-American, heads Planned Parenthood. Indeed, the overall high level of black leadership representation throughout feminist-oriented organizations and the assertive orientation of feminist organizations in behalf of black-related issues, constitutes one of the strongest areas of integration in American life.

Yet, although there is room for debate in gauging this development, we do not think America has yet achieved an integrated society. We do think the goal is both worthwhile and feasible and that liberals and progressives—the left—must stay the course. □

TABLE VI
BLACK ATTITUDES ON GROUP BONDS AND TRANS-RACIAL TIES
(Percent)

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Care
Black parents should give their children African names	3	17	56	10	14
Black children should study an African language	14	42	29	6	9
Black people should shop in black-owned stores whenever possible	16	47	30	4	3
Blacks should always vote for black candidates when they run	13	26	51	7	3
Black women should not date white men	13	26	51	7	3
Black men should not date white women	13	18	48	8	13

SOURCE: Gerald Jaynes and Robin Williams, *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, D.C., National Academy Press, 1989), p. 199.

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Notes

[1] See, for instance, John Buenker, *Urban Liberalism And Progressive Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), esp. Chapter 2 on "Bread and Butter Liberalism: Launching the Welfare State"; Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia, N.C.* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1942); John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1980).

[2] See Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969).

[3] This act places the burden of proof in race and gender disputes over hiring practices on the shoulders of businesses, thereby overruling 1990 Supreme Court decisions that placed the burden on employees.

[4] See Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1990).

[5] See Derek Bok and John Dunlop, *Labor and The American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970); Richard Freeman and James Medoff, *What Do Unions Do?* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

[6] For a vivid view of farmers' high popular image as beneficiaries of federal affirmative assistance policies, see John Gunther, *Inside the U.S.A.* (New York: Harper Bros., 1947), Chapters 16–21.

[7] For Afro-Americans' new social mobility, see Martin Kilson, "Problems of Black Politics," *Dissent* (Fall 1989).

[8] *The New York Times* (May 6, 1991).

[9] John Gunther, *Inside the U.S.A.* (New York: Harper Bros., 1947), pp. 680–681.

[10] See Martin Kilson, "The Weakness of Black Politics," *Dissent* (Fall 1987).

[11] Arnold Hirsch, "The Black Struggle for Integrated Housing in Chicago," in Melvin Holli, ed. *Ethnic Chicago* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Co., 1984), p. 398.

[12] Poll data are in Lee Sigelman and Susan Welch, *Black Americans' Views of Racial Equality* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), p. 57.

[13] Gerald Jaynes and Robin Williams, Jr., *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989), p. 27.

[14] Jaynes and Williams, *A Common Destiny*, pp. 76–80.

Mr. Justice

The editors of *Dissent* join with many other Americans in paying tribute to Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, intrepid fighter for civil rights, humane upholder of liberal values. When asked, after his resignation from the Court, what kind of person should replace him, he answered, "Me." Justice Marshall was absolutely right.

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Ruth Rosen

A LETTER TO JIRINA SIKLOVA

On American Feminism and Gender Democracy

April 1991

DEAR JIRINA,

In June 1990, we sat in your Prague apartment sipping tea as a soft summer breeze floated through opened windows. I asked you endless questions about the experiences of female dissidents and the problems facing Czechoslovakian women after the fall of communism.

We talked about the ingenious political strategies women devised when they were dissidents. We discussed the Christian groups who now will try to limit abortion. We spoke about economists' plans to "retire" women to the home in order to ease unemployment. You explained why, after decades of state-coerced labor, many women will view this as progressive. We talked, too, about the difficult economic dependence some of those women may eventually confront. You helped me understand why a social democratic left that could promote women's (or workers') rights still reeks, for many people, of communist betrayal. Still, you predicted that a "hard feminism" might emerge within five years to redress the grievances of women in your society.

As we finished, you suddenly turned and asked me a difficult question. "You've had twenty years of feminism. What mistakes did you make? We don't have time to make the same ones. What can we learn from your two decades of feminist activism?"

Since then I have given it much thought. From our discussions, you already know how much hope and meaning feminism has brought to my life and the lives of millions of American women. But now I must speak of the opportunities we squandered. As your new friend and colleague, I can give you nothing less than my honest reflections.

I choose the form of the "private letter" intentionally. This is the way dissidents in the democratic opposition often communicated their ideas with one another. Among political and intellectual circles in East Central Europe there is still resistance to identifying the gender-specific problems women confront in society—rape, sexual harassment, wife beating, lack of contraception or abortion, informal cultural devaluation, and formal occupational segregation. I write in a "prerevolutionary" form, then, to underscore the invisibility of women's needs and the fact that "gender democracy" has yet to rise up from underground and take its place among the larger human rights of the revolution.

Mistakes, errors in judgment, failures of imagination—yes, there were many. My task, however, is not to excuse or condemn but to comprehend the historical context from which these flowed.

Feminism is a product of political culture, even as it helps shape that culture. For the purpose of this letter, I want to define feminism as the gender consciousness that people employ

Jirina Siklova, a Czechoslovakian sociologist, was banned from Charles University after 1968. Sentenced to ten years in prison for smuggling manuscripts to the West, she spent one year in jail, and was a signatory of Charter 77. She has now founded a new department of applied sociology at Charles University and in the fall of 1991 will teach the first course in gender studies.

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to improve women's situation in a particular society. Every wave of feminism, wherever and whenever it appears, targets different problems, flashes different symbols, uses different political discourses, confronts different adversaries, and seeks different solutions.

As gender consciousness emerges, women confront different political traditions and discourses within a political culture. Every feminist movement decides whether it can build upon existing political culture or must avoid a political discourse contaminated by past political experience. In the nineteenth century, American suffragists demanded that the United States live up to the promises of its Declaration of Independence. When the second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s, it both drew upon American ideas of individual freedom and equality *and* tried to redefine the meaning of those words at the same time.

Feminism in the mid-sixties caught many Americans by surprise. In hindsight, however, American feminism now seems an inevitable result of the massive economic, social, and cultural changes of the postwar era: the large number of women who entered the work force during the fifties and sixties, the increased life span of women, the revolution in birth control technology and attitudes toward sexuality, the elevated expectations—and disillusionment—of thousands of women who swelled college enrollments, the development of movements and an insurgent counterculture that rejected traditional authority.

Taken together, these changes not only created the preconditions for a second wave of feminism but also set its agenda. During the fifties, the American middle class, enjoying an unprecedented affluence, came to idealize an ideology of domesticity. In her book *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan described the despair, boredom, and isolation of college-educated housewives as "the problem with no name." Lacking a way to see that their troubles had public roots, housewives experienced them as personal, and kept silence.

At the same time, paradoxically, the cult of domesticity was being undermined by the growing number of married, middle-class women entering an expanding labor market. Working women, whose number doubled during the fifties, encountered sexual harassment, a sex-segregated labor force, and sex discrimination in pay, hiring, and promotion.

But working women dared not complain. The popular press pilloried them—and especially the few feminists—as indecent mothers, sex-starved neurotics, or social misfits. McCarthyism, moreover, successfully associated some feminists with communism. In popular culture, working women became associated with the East Bloc, where women worked outside the home and child-care centers tended their children. In contrast, the American housewife emerged as the true cold warrior against the red menace.

Daughters of the fifties, sensing the bitterness of their mothers, or rebelling against the cultural ideal of the housewife, entered a new decade eagerly mapping escapes. By the end of the 1950s, housewives, working women, and their daughters bore many grievances for which there existed no language, no political expression, and little public awareness. To a large extent, feminism arose to redress these unarticulated grievances.

The liberal political culture of the early 1960s accelerated this process. The moral clarity of the civil rights movement to desegregate the South inspired many Americans. Once race relations had been challenged, it was a small step toward questioning the "natural" presumption of women's subordination in society. John F. Kennedy, moreover, created a special task force in the early 1960s to investigate the status of American women.

The National Organization for Women (NOW), founded in 1966, grew directly from the Kennedy administration's unwillingness to live up to its own liberal promises. During the 1960s, Congress passed laws guaranteeing women equal pay for equal work and ending legal sex discrimination in federal employment. But the enforcing agencies regarded women's grievances as frivolous. Fueled by rising expectations and frustrations, NOW was founded to pressure agencies and to end all sex discrimination. Like the liberal political culture from which it emerged, the organization emphasized individual rights and claimed for women the same rights men enjoyed in American society.

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With no other choice under U.S. law, NOW presumed that women could and should aspire to the conditions of men's lives. Throughout the fifties, women's "difference" had been used as the basis for exclusion from much of American cultural and economic life. The idea of complete equality with men was therefore extremely appealing.

Since the late sixties, many U.S. feminists have criticized a legal system that forces women to choose between protective legislation and an equality based on men's experience. As yet, there exists no "equality with a difference" under U.S. law that recognizes the need for parental leave and child care and supports family life. This is what I mean by "gender democracy." As a result, much of the legislation that has given women "equal rights" has meant that women could have it all if they did it all. The belief that an individual should solve his or her own problems runs deep in American political culture. Even after twenty years, neither men nor the government has been willing to step in and acknowledge that child care and housework are everyone's responsibility.

At the same time, younger women activists in the civil rights, student, and antiwar movements of the 1960s began to create the women's liberation movement. Through their participation in radical organizations, these "daughters of the fifties," raised under the feminine mystique but determined to carve out new lives, had learned new skills and gained confidence. As political activists, they came to see themselves as the equals of men. Regrettably, young men in the movement were not as quick to grasp these changes; they sometimes treated their female coworkers as personal secretaries and denied them leadership roles.

The availability of the Pill and the so-called "sexual revolution" of the mid-sixties, moreover, also generated new frustrations. At first, many young women celebrated the new freedoms. But the sexual revolution was incomplete, and gradually young women recognized that fact. Abortion remained unavailable or illegal. As women flaunted their new sexual freedom—clad scantily in miniskirts—new forms of sexual aggression and exploitation greeted their apparent sexual availability. Some young women began to question the use of their bodies as sexual objects—whether by movement "brothers" or advertisers. Stripped of their traditional sexual veto—by which women had formerly extracted promises of male financial support and emotional commitment—many young women began to regard the sexual revolution as a male-defined proposition. For the most part, they did not reject the ideal of sexual revolution; on the contrary, they sought to reclaim it on terms that would ensure women's equality.

At movement conferences, young women began voicing their frustrations, but suffered further humiliation when their early feminist demands were ridiculed by some male counterparts. Some men in the left trivialized women's issues as bourgeois problems, to be addressed "after the revolution."

In this setting, a few women started small groups to discuss their confusion and anger. Soon hundreds of "consciousness raising" groups spread across the nation. Small numbers of women met in each other's homes and began to redefine their individual problems as social problems. Within a year, the movement had become a household word—often ridiculed, but infectiously appealing to large numbers of educated women in their twenties and thirties. In large cities, umbrella organizations arose to maintain some form of cohesion and help initiate the thousands of women who wanted to join small groups.

The women's liberation movement proceeded to spin away from the New Left. At its inception in the early 1960s, the New Left had tried to avoid the dogmatism and authoritarianism of the Old (American communist) Left. Because McCarthyism had discredited all efforts at social change as communist-inspired, the New Left tried to find a way to be noncommunist yet committed to radical social change within a participatory democracy.

By the late 1960s, however, many people in the New Left had slid into Marxist or Maoist sectarian groups that romanticized Third World liberation movements, adopted Marxist or Maoist vocabularies, and believed they were part of a "vanguard" destined to lead the oppressed through an impending revolution.

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One of the most important contributions of the women's liberation movement was to grasp the political dimensions of personal life. Politics had always been associated with government, from which Americans were increasingly estranged. Now, young feminists began to inquire into the politics of everyday life and adopted the slogan "The Personal Is Political."

Revelations tumbled upon revelations. In consciousness-raising groups, women gradually observed that many of their personal problems were shared by other women. They confided stories of illegal abortions, rapes, beatings by their husbands, sexual harassment, faked orgasms, and lesbian experiences.

Committed to challenging all authority and received wisdom about women's and men's roles, women's liberationists initially shunned liberal efforts to change laws or enforce government regulations. Instead, they questioned social and "private" arrangements—women's responsibility for housework and child care, society's devaluation of women's traditional work and their status as the lowest paid workers, their exclusion from professional careers, the sexual double standard, and sexual dissatisfaction and exploitation.

Hardly an area of women's lives went unscrutinized. These were exciting times. It is difficult to evoke the sense of discovery, the rage that accompanied revelation, the naive belief in immediate change.

During the next decades, many of these revelations changed U.S. society. Many new laws and judicial decisions recognized women's grievances as legitimate. Abortion became legal; laws concerning rape and the treatment of its victims changed in most states; sexual harassment at workplaces became illegal; lesbians won many rights; and a network of battered-women's shelters, rape crisis centers, and women's health centers dotted the nation. Thanks to the work of liberal feminists, legal sex discrimination became more difficult, and affirmative action helped draw many women into new occupations. Thanks to the courage and boldness of radical feminists, American culture had to confront the dark underside of women's lives.

Inevitably, there were errors and excesses. Some of the feminist movement's greatest strengths and weaknesses can be traced to the political culture of the New Left. From the civil rights movement they inherited the strong belief that "separate but equal" would never guarantee equality; from the New Left they inherited an idealistic commitment to expose every instance of inequality and hypocrisy in American society. From the late New Left, however, they also acquired an apocalyptic revolutionary utopianism that shunned structure and leadership and required activists to live as though an altogether transformed future had already replaced the present.

It was not surprising, then, that young feminists would romanticize women's gains in "socialist" countries and Third World liberation movements, proclaim themselves to be the "true" vanguard, and imagine that patriarchy, a term used to describe a male-centered society, would soon crumble. Such revolutionary romanticism inevitably alienated the mainstream of American women, who feared the radicalism of the New Left and the sexually extravagant and drug-happy youthful counterculture.

Leadership was another quandary for both the New Left and the women's liberation movement. Strongly influenced by Maoism, some feminists trashed their own leaders, particularly those with expertise, and thereby retarded the growth of genuine political leadership. By default, the movement allowed the media to create unrepresentative feminist stars. The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), which deeply infiltrated the movement, fed the fears of leaders and helped sow distrust and envy among women.

The idea that the personal is political was also limited. Early activists were largely middle-class, young, heterosexual women whose personal concerns—identity, sexuality, and sex discrimination—did not address the needs of all women. The inspirational slogan "Sisterhood Is Powerful" embodied the wistful hope that women everywhere would band together to create a more egalitarian society.

During the 1970s, different female populations in the United States redefined feminism

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according to their own needs and experiences. Lesbians, who still suffered enormous discrimination, publicized the reality of homosexual experience and sexuality. Working-class women organized to promote specific changes in offices and factories. Black women redefined feminism to address the legacy of racism. Chicanas, heirs to a strong family tradition, tried to advance their own rights, without adopting the antifamily attitudes that had infused the first years of the women's liberation movement.

Meanwhile, the problem of "vanguardism" haunted the movement from its earliest days. Each group tried to claim that, because it was the most oppressed, it therefore was entitled to lead the movement. Working-class women often tried to make middle-class women feel guilty for being privileged. Black women rightly accused white women of racism, but sometimes used their double burden of oppression to avoid useful political coalitions. During the mid-seventies, many lesbians dogmatically insisted that a true feminist had to join them and separate from men. The self-righteous moralism of those who claimed they were the most oppressed or the most politically correct drove other women to fear personal attacks and social stigma.

Separatism—also part of the late sixties political climate—also hurt the women's movement. The integrationist impulse of the civil rights movement had been eclipsed by Black Power activists and black nationalists. Some women, tired of trying to change men, fed up with homophobic attitudes, or simply seeking a safe community, created a separatist women's movement. The growth of this women's culture spawned much vital music, literature, and art. But young separatists tended to confuse ends with means. In the name of "political correctness," some separatists began surveilling each other's personal lives for political orthodoxy. How one lived became equated with one's politics. This was a dark side of the idea that "the personal is political." Movement culture became a totalitarian nightmare. Many women therefore took their agitation for feminist issues elsewhere—to the workplace, to government agencies, to universities, and to cultural arenas.

The movement's emphasis on sexual exploitation and sexual crimes transformed American society, even as it alienated many conservative Americans. The effort to reclaim the sexual revolution on women's terms has consumed many activists for the last two decades. During the 1970s and 1980s, feminists "named" many sexual crimes: sexual harassment, wife battering, incest, as well as marital and date rape. Lesbian activists simultaneously proclaimed the legitimacy of love between women. But feminists did not agree on such matters. Some wanted to abolish prostitution and pornography, for example, while others, committed to protecting prostitutes' rights and free speech, sought to loosen sexual mores while educating men against sexual exploitation and violence.

The strong critique of the nuclear family hurt the movement in profound ways. During the 1970s, feminists largely ceded family concerns to the New Right and squandered the opportunity to appeal to a broad constituency. Not surprisingly, many women outside the movement initially feared that becoming a feminist meant that one had to forsake motherhood and marriage. The media, too, reinforced the image that feminists were lonely career women who knew no form of love.

This revulsion toward family life, however, must be understood historically as a visceral reaction to the feminine mystique. The ghost that haunted many young women was a housewife wrapped in an apron. They knew they wanted to exorcise the feminine mystique—but they had precious few models of independent women who led fulfilling lives and still enjoyed family life. Later, as they aged and no longer feared replicating the lives of 1950s middle-class women, radical feminists rediscovered in mothering many values with which they hoped to transform society. Not until the mid-eighties, amid scarce resources and a conservative political climate, did feminists agitate for economic, social, and family policies that could appeal to women of all backgrounds.

By 1980, issues raised by the women's movement had seeped into American culture and national politics. The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan was riddled with appeals for a

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renewed "traditional" nuclear family, patriarchal authority, an end to abortion, and "traditional values"—code for women and minorities knowing their place. This is not to suggest that feminists by themselves caused the powerful right-wing backlash in American political life. The social movements of the 1960s ignited a cultural and political civil war. By challenging gender relations, feminism pushed issues related to the family and sexuality to the top of the national political agenda. And there they have remained, still debated, still contested.

"Feminism bashing"—blaming feminism for other unresolved social problems—became quite a national sport in the 1980s. Women's loneliness, the high divorce rate, men's impotence, eating disorders, the feminization of poverty, infertility, and all manner of ills were blamed on feminism. Efforts to encourage men to take more responsibility for household work and the care of children largely failed. Political support for parental leave or child care—all social democratic goals of the early women's movement—was slim. As a result, some American women came to blame feminism—not men or the government—for their poverty or exhaustion.

Still, the accomplishments of this wave of feminism have been extraordinary. Efforts to proclaim feminism dead or to espouse a "new traditionalism" fall on deaf ears of women who work to support themselves. Increasingly, families require two incomes to survive. High rates of divorce and growing poverty among women and children make it necessary for a majority of mothers to work. Like women in former communist societies, American women work two shifts and experience leisure as *the* ultimate scarce resource. Despite the cultural backlash, by 1990 a majority of American women described themselves as sympathetic to feminist objectives.

Efforts to improve women's lives and ensure their human rights have spread around the world. The gradual emergence of global feminist networks constitutes one of the more astonishing and irreversible results of American feminism.

Still, we could have done better. Political orthodoxy often foreclosed debate and, even worse, diminished support. Revolutionary romanticism and cultural feminism excluded many ordinary American women. Ignoring the economic and cultural needs of families prevented the movement from reaching across class and racial divides. The level of women's rage—which grew out of their shock at men's incomprehension of the female experience and their sense of entitlement in a democratic culture—helped publicize the issues, released much repressed anger, but also scared many potential male and female supporters.

Before I end, I want to try to make a few observations on the very different circumstances you face. I do this with humility, knowing the limits of my knowledge.

You are facing a period of great economic

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dislocation and deprivation. Survival, not women's grievances, is your most pressing issue at present. The tragedy is that the collapse of communism represents such an extraordinary opportunity to rethink how women and men can more fully participate in civil and private life.

The very words "women's emancipation" were contaminated by communist regimes' effort to coerce female participation in the labor force. With the ghost of totalitarian states haunting the democratic opposition, it may be difficult even to discuss women's needs without sounding "too much like a communist."

Our mistakes will not be yours. However, I can imagine some interesting comparisons. Whereas we rebelled against a coercive ideology of domesticity, women in East Central Europe will be reacting against state-coerced labor. Starved for consumer goods and time with their families, some of you may well romanticize the unbridled market and consumer society of the United States—just as some American feminists romanticized "socialism" and Third World liberation movements. The desire to have more time with children may blind some women to the humiliation and subordination that can accompany economic dependence in a market economy. In their haste to leave behind communist institutions, many women may agree to give up important social welfare policies that have protected them and their children from poverty.

If and when a women's movement does arise, you may well face some familiar problems. The brave and moral men who helped topple the old regime rarely considered the role women would play in the new civil society. Will they support women's choices, or will they argue, as revolutionaries have always argued, that women's needs can be addressed later? You may also discover that women of different classes, religions, and nationalities will disagree about what constitutes female emancipation.

I am left with questions. What political discourse can you employ to both improve and protect the conditions of women's lives? Will you be able to expand the language of human rights, which so powerfully fueled the democratic opposition? Will you redefine the concepts of citizenship and civil society? What will you target as your most important goals and priorities? Who will offer the strongest opposition? The most subtle opposition? Can competing visions of female freedom be reconciled?

One revolution is over. Someday, a revolution within the revolution will begin. It will not be as dramatic as toppling a communist state. It will be more subtle, more culturally threatening, but profoundly revolutionary. One day, the pendulum will swing again. New grievances will be heard. And when that time comes, my friend, may you find the determination necessary to withstand the cultural and political convulsions that accompany the effort to create a gender democracy.

Meanwhile, I extend my solidarity and best wishes.

Affectionately,
RUTH □

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Marshall Berman

AFTER THE GOLD RUSH

A Nostalgic Retrospect of the Sixties

Recent films about the 1960s belong to one of the basic romantic genres: nostalgic retrospect. The great pioneer of this genre in English was the poet William Wordsworth. Wordsworth gave us several luminous visions of his rural childhood and of his youth in Paris during the French Revolution. But in romantic literature, nostalgic vision is only the beginning of the story. What happens next, what's bound to happen, is that the vision is lost: it fades or shatters, or gets twisted into a grim parody of itself. Then the self feels empty of life, thrown into dejection and anguish. Serious romanticism is addressed to people stuck in primal traumas. Facing up to our past—as Hegel said, "to look the negative in the face and live with it"—can give us strength to let go of our old life, and go on to build a new one. Nostalgic retrospect can put us—individuals, cultures—in touch with some of our lost and forgotten energies. A good book or film about the sixties should make us feel it was noble and beautiful, it was dreadful, it had to die, it can't come back, but it had a live core that will enrich our lives if we can incorporate it.

Berkeley was the sixties' Sutter's Mill, the place where American students first discovered themselves and then, thanks largely to television network news (which was just beginning its own golden age), got discovered by the world. Thousands of miles away, people—mostly, but not only, young people—could feel the rush of discovery. Berkeley seemed to open up new ways for Americans to imagine and organize themselves, new forms of social poetry. That first gold rush gave the place an aura. After a quarter century, so much has changed but the aura lives; the very phrase, "Berkeley in the Sixties," still brings back that wild surmise.

The real stars of this movie, as of all movies about the 1960s, are "the kids": crowds of anonymous young people whom no one invited but who came and just kept coming, year after year. All over the United States, they sat down or marched in the cold and rain, stood still through endless speeches, went to jail, got hurt—at the decade's end some even got killed—and still kept coming. Not only kept coming, but somehow kept smiling. I was part of crowds like this. Some of our close encounters with authority, especially in the Nixon years, were pretty scary; in retrospect I'm amazed I wasn't more scared. (Viewing films about the sixties, and seeing some of those official faces close up, I'm scared now.) But there was something uncanny about those 1960s crowds that made us feel youthfully invulnerable, so that when police or soldiers charged, we laughed as we ran.

BERKELEY IN THE SIXTIES. A documentary film by Mark Kitchell. California Newsreel. Running time 117 minutes. Narrated by Susan Griffin. Featuring Jentri Anders, Frank Bardacke, Hardy Frye, John Gage, Jackie Goldberg, David Hilliard, Barry Melton, Mike Miller, Suzy Nelson, Ruth Rosen, Michael Rossman, Bobby Seale, John Searle, and Jack Weinberg. Shown in New York and around the United States, Fall 1990, and on PBS, Spring 1991. Order from California Newsreel, 149 9th St., #420, San Francisco, CA 94103.

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Mark Kitchell's film offers affectionate pictures of Berkeley's kids. His best views are on the U.C. campus, one of the most gorgeous environments in the world. Actually, the university buildings are mediocre; but you are enfolded by lush foliage that grows all year round, by landscape architecture that unobtrusively knits people, buildings, and trees together, and by the spectacular backdrop of the hills, the bay, and the San Francisco skyline rising like a vision from the mist. Berkeley/Oakland has the best weather in the Bay Area, and anytime it isn't raining it's warm enough to hang out. The kids hang out a lot, and they get beautifully tan; though where everybody's got a tan, it's no big deal. To flesh out this environment, early in the movie, Kitchell offers long, languid glimpses of the campus as it was in the early 1960s. Some of this footage has the feel of a recruiting film made by the university itself. We see the kids ride their bikes to class, read paperbacks on the grass, stretch their limbs and smile at each other. Who can resist their sweetness, their radiant health, their innocent sexuality? They can't see us (and their own future selves) looking; they can't see the darkening green.

Kitchell focuses on Sproul Plaza, just inside the university's main gate, where, in the late 1950s and early sixties, students spontaneously developed a kind of dream agora. Here people came together, made speeches, debated and heckled, distributed literature, raised money, recruited sympathizers for every imaginable cause and every experiment in living, or just hung out. Every group and idea had a table, and dozens peacefully coexisted. It looks like all you could wish for in a political space. Imagine the old, all-male City College of New York cafeteria. Add sun, trees, girls, plenty of leisure. And add discretionary income: this was the peak of the greatest capitalist boom in history, and California, thanks to post–World War II aerospace and electronics, was the most prosperous place in the country. The amazing thing is that, at the height of a great national consumer orgy, so many of these kids, who looked like the cast of some California beach movie, got so *serious*. Among the things they talked about were civil rights, mutual aid, the meaning of citizenship, the common good; they used an underused public space to talk about how to live a public life.

I said, Who could resist their sweetness? In fact, the whole educational bureaucracy of California, including the superintendent of schools and the board of regents, lined up against these kids; for years it campaigned vindictively to break them. Even when Berkeley's radicals were celebrating the Constitution, the powers treated Sproul Plaza like a launching pad for bombs. There seems to have been some sort of *Gleichschaltung*, enlisting all state agencies and mass media to get those kids. Much of our talk of "polarization" at the end of the sixties fails to grasp the fact that, in Nixon's and Reagan's California (as in much of America), the Right Pole was actively magnetic from the start.

A chronic contradiction that gripped the California right was a clash between its desire for a docile labor force and its drive to get spectacularly rich. The desire for wealth beyond dreams led it to seek out the most talented people it could find; but the more it sought the best, the more it risked ideas and (as they say in Iran) uncontrolled associations. This had always been a hazard for Hollywood, which was finally emerging from its blacklist era. The board of regents faced similar problems, which were aggravated as the state's prosperity, increasingly rooted in mass media and electronics, grew and grew. They were constantly seeking ways to screen "outside agitators"—in California this tended to mean New York Jews—out of their educational system. But the closer that system got to world class, the harder it was to keep it pure.

Clark Kerr, chancellor in the early sixties, was committed to intellectual excellence, and he seemed to understand that world-class minds thrive on conflict. Kitchell treats Kerr as a tragic figure, and gives him the film's longest speech, to expound his concept of the pluralist "multiversity." What Kerr doesn't say is that this concept was a strategy to convince the state's ruling class to accept a high level of trouble, by assuring them that the university's complexity would keep the trouble from

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spilling over. For a few years, the board bought it; but when the spill became a flood, they kicked him out.

The regents eventually realized they would never be able to screen troublemakers out. Instead, they seized the initiative and made troubles of their own. State legal authorities developed the bizarre doctrine—something you'd expect to find in military Latin America, or communist Eastern Europe—that talking politics was forbidden on public property. Even Chancellor Kerr, an authoritarian but a smart and honest man, went along (apparently without laughing), and, in September 1964, decreed the end of political talk on university grounds.

This decree turned out to be a disaster for the authorities. Suddenly all the plaza's tables pulled together: the university's contentious political groups united overnight, and created the Free Speech Movement (FSM). The FSM was one of the decade's most stirring adventures in mass mobilization, and probably Berkeley's one permanent gift to American political culture. In its year or so, it functioned as a genuine democratic movement, encompassing thousands of people. It refused to elect leaders, met all through the night, made decisions by consensus. It brought together young and old, beatniks and solid citizens, Goldwater Youth and the Young People's Socialist League. Politically, the FSM was fighting to expand and deepen a basic American liberal idea: the right to talk. Culturally, it was part of the general opening up that America went through in the 1960s. It believed we could and should say *everything*, that more openness, even bitter and angry openness, would be good for us. If Thomas Jefferson was one of its heroes, another was Lenny Bruce.

One of the FSM's best talkers was Mario Savio, son of an aerospace mechanic from Queens, a graduate student in philosophy. Frail but intense, he resembled the young Bob Dylan. Savio had two basic raps. The first one took off on Kerr's own image of the "knowledge factory," and demanded basic rights for the students/workers. "Where is *our* Wagner Act?" Savio asked. The second, more complex rap blended Marx, Sartre, Hannah Arendt, late Wittgenstein, John Austin, and the Warren Court. It said that, in a mass society where people are separated from each other and alienated from their own activities, the right to engage in politics is a matter of life and death. But what did doing politics mean? One of the main things politics could mean, Savio said, was *talking*—talking about what you'd like to do—even if much of what you'd like was illegal. Talking about illegal action is fundamentally different from acting it out. Sometimes the talk catches on, the desire spreads, and the law gets changed, so the illegal becomes legal. Then talk can change the world. But even if that never happens, the *activity* of talk can itself create a community that binds people together through their speech-acts, where they affirm shared fantasy and desire.

But *Berkeley in the Sixties* is most exciting when it evokes the FSM's great *journées*, days when the kids in the crowd became the stars. Its first *journée* unfolded in Sproul Plaza when Jack Weinberg, in the act of making a speech on behalf of CORE, was seized by the university police. They tried to take him away in a police car. Suddenly, spontaneously, hundreds of people surrounded the car, and kept the police, and Weinberg, and themselves, pinned down all through the night. We see closeups of faces—Weinberg's, the cops, the crowd's: no one was prepared for this; it was uncanny for them all. That night, standing on the police car, using their mike, dozens of people, most of them anonymous, exhorted, denounced, pleaded, told their life stories, and sang. My favorite speech is by a man (we see only his back) who expounds on Aristotle on beasts, gods, and citizens. What makes this moment memorable is the pure thrill of free speech: a whole generation discovering that it is possible to say *anything*. Even the ancient Greeks could come out of the closet!

The next *journée* is a mass overnight occupation of Sproul Hall. We hear Joan Baez tell the demonstrators, "When you go in, go in with love in your hearts." Inside, people sing and dance (many do the *hora*), tell each other jokes, try in vain to get comfortable on the hard

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floors. Nobody breaks anything. After many hours the police come, but no violence or rage breaks out on either side. Jentri Anders recalls being asked, "Now do you want to get dragged out of here or do you want to walk out like a lady?" And she says, "I said, 'I want to get dragged out like a lady.' " She laughs and laughs; then her laugh turns sad: wasn't that a time, when you could make a militant protest and get dragged out like a lady.

Kitchell presents his last FSM crowd scene as the end of this golden age. Just after the Sproul Hall sit-in, Kerr calls a convocation, in Berkeley's majestic outdoor Greek Theatre, to announce a compromise between the administration and the FSM. The meeting is brief and dull. Savio tells the television news cameras he thinks the compromise is hypocritical. As Kerr adjourns, we see Savio get up and try to speak; people shout, "We want Mario!" Suddenly two enormous cops grab him, throw him to the ground, and, as the crowd shrieks, maul him like a drug dealer on a television police show. Then Kerr meets the press and explains: Mr. Savio was trying to speak without permission. Yes, Mr. Savio had requested permission earlier in the day, but it was denied because the agenda was already set. What's shocking here isn't just the insensitivity. In the history of the decade, it looks like one more nodal point: the end of civility. And it isn't the kids who end it.

Ironically, this violent outbreak triggered so much outrage that now, unexpectedly, the FSM won what it had been fighting for: the right of the agora. But Berkeley's agora had little chance to be the beautiful place it promised to be, because, once the pressure was off the university itself, people who came to talk were almost immediately swept away by world events far beyond their control. Jentri Anders remembers an FSM rally that was like a love feast to welcome the new freedom. She was on her way home, one foot out the gate, when she heard Savio from the platform say, "Now don't walk away, we have to stop the war." Pause. Pause. "And I thought: What war?" Laughter through tears.

That moment turns out to be Kitchell's dramatic climax. Though the film still has two-thirds to run, from now on it will run downhill. The war in Vietnam overwhelmed the brightest hopes of the sixties. Not right away. Indeed, at first the war expanded and heated up public space all over the country. Here was something big that all Americans had to confront. The war created a sense of patriotism and civic responsibility just as intense in its opponents as in its supporters (though its supporters rarely grasped this). It taught large numbers of people that they had to organize, and forced them to learn how. It generated solidarity in many people who had grown up feeling like charter members of the lonely crowd. It raised the consciousness of millions of Americans about imperialism—including Americans who hated words like consciousness-raising and imperialism—and their new self-awareness kept us from overtly invading Central America in the eighties and, if we are lucky, may keep us from even more disastrous adventures in the nineties. All reasons to be grateful. But it also forced a whole generation to use its freshest energies trying to STOP things, instead of starting new ways to live the good life. It stirred up depths of rage and hate, not only in our hawks but in ourselves, and made hate the driving force of national politics. And it destroyed the new freedom of the agora: in its place, it brought an atmosphere where it was possible (indeed, necessary) to make speeches, but not possible to talk.

Once the war takes hold, Berkeley loses some of its aura. In the last part of the 1960s, every place lost some of its aura: the same dreams and nightmares came to life all over. Clips of the USA doing horrible things to Vietnam alternate with clips of ever larger and more desperate demonstrations at home. The police violence that seemed so outrageous in 1964 became routine only a couple of years later. The playfulness and irony that marked the decade's early militancy ("I want to get dragged out like a lady") gave way to eruptions of primal rage. And the early-sixties community of talk gradually disintegrated, so that the FSM vision of dialogue among fellow citizens gave way to a radically different model of politics: a heroic "vanguard" deploying "the

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masses" for their liberation. (Clark Kerr, as deeply committed to vanguard politics as any Leninist, must have laughed.) When was this great paradigm shift? Nobody today seems to remember when, maybe because the values of the protesters just didn't seem to matter. Nothing made much of a difference; the war just went on.

Toward the end of the decade, the antiwar movement was numerically growing—it never stopped growing—and yet, inwardly, emotionally, it was coming apart. Now Kitchell's format of many voices pays off, as his guides begin sharply to diverge. Some of them describe demonstrations with all the relish of old generals portraying great campaigns. They also seem to share with generals a readiness to sacrifice large numbers of people for the sake of tactical victories. "We won, we won!" one exclaims after a bloody "Stop the Draft" action that tied up downtown Oakland in the fall of 1967. But another guide regrets the way they tore up the front yards of postmen and bus drivers, just those people whose sons were going, and whose hearts and minds the movement needed to win. And a third remembers this action as "a violent temper tantrum for the boys." Did she say it that way in 1967? We can't tell. But now, finally, the movie is being honest about some of the radically different impulses and contradictory values that tore 1960s radicalism apart even as they helped it grow.

As the sixties went on, and the war escalated, the left came to identify more and more with the aggressor, and with the strident machismo that America has always celebrated in its Westerns and gangster films—and, ironically, in its war propaganda. Its heroes were Bogart, Dean, and Brando, "real" men who hated the establishment and would rather blow things up and die than submit and obey. American machismo entered radical politics through the idea of the heroic vanguard. This metaphor, drawn from the military strategy of Napoleon's day (and appropriated by nineteenth-century avant-garde artists long before it was seized by radical politicians), was totally at odds with the vision of participatory democracy that distinguished the FSM and the New Left. But it looked sexy to our mass media, so hungry for "high concept" stereotypes and sensational headlines.* And it began to look sexier to more people as the democratic antiwar movement got bigger and bigger yet seemed to get nowhere, and the war just grew and grew.

In those days, democratic radicalism survived mainly in two forms. The older, classic form was based on an idea of respect for ordinary folks and an understanding that the hard-pressed bus drivers and postmen and housewives and secretaries—and their sons, the soldiers—were as human as ourselves. The culture hero for this form was Woody Guthrie, dream synthesizer of Dust Bowl Populism and New York Jewish Marxism. Many people on the left kept thinking: if only somebody could find a way to do this today! (The one who finally did was Bruce Springsteen, in a series of brilliant records from "Darkness on the Edge of Town" to "Born in the U.S.A." But it was only after the sixties, and after the war, and after the sixties left's collapse.) The newer form, which came into its own at the decade's end, was a feminist vision of nurturance and empathy for all, and peace and mutual recognition that could spring from "maternal thinking." Much of the poetry and power of 1960s feminism grew out of its feeling for the limits of a left to which it nevertheless belonged, and which it saw through from within. Ruth Rosen, who criticized the demo and "the boys," still knew that, for all the faults, she had to be out there on the fault line.

Kitchell skips over 1968–69, one of the New Left's nadirs. By then, the conflicting impulses had exploded and split the mass movement into grouplets that were fighting with classic

* See Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching*, for a classic account of the process of collusion between many antiwar activists and our national mass media at the end of the 1960s. This collusion emphasized—and hence empowered—a *macho* style of leadership and a cult of personality that put the New Left in the headlines and assimilated it to conventional American mass culture, but helped to kill it by cutting it off from its roots in ordinary people's everyday lives. Twenty years later, there are signs that the American left has grown more aware of the danger than it used to be. But who knows if this self-awareness will last—or if it will be enough to make a difference—when times change and once more the left will be on page one every day?

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sectarian fury to destroy each other. (For awhile, grouplets seemed to preempt all other radical identity: the only question was, Which One Are You In?) One of the dreadful nodal points, left out here, was the national SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) split in early 1969. After this, a lot of smart and sane young people became grotesque parodies of themselves. Intellectuals at home with the most complex ideas could suddenly speak only in Anglo-Saxon expletives: "Hate . . . burn . . . pig . . . kill." Gentle people took paramilitary training (in Berkeley, they had military exercises in Willard Park: they called it Ho Chi Minh Park then; what do they call it now?), learned to build bombs, wrote broadsheets demanding the execution of their lifelong friends, took new names, disappeared, sometimes blew themselves up.

The movie's *dénoument*, set in the spring and summer of 1969, is People's Park. Students plant grass and shrubs; old people work and direct them; three-year-olds have a ball. (How nice to see all the generations together, for once. It reminds us of a real life that rarely surfaces in Berkeley.) Mario Savio makes a speech, "In our leisure time, we make the social revolution." (Seeing it then on the evening news, I wondered what Mario had smoked for lunch.) In the Park, Berkeley's popular democracy could spring to life again. People on the left could stop killing each other and behave in simple human ways. They could feel free from the frenzy of hate, orchestrated in Nixon's White House, that poisoned all American politics at the end of the sixties.* They could get back to the feeling for people that drew them to the left in the first place. And for once they could actually *start* something. Yet even as they felt free—Kitchell's many narrators all say this—they knew they were trapped, knew their assertion of freedom would bring down some dreadful retribution.

Kitchell shows Governor Reagan with the press, mugging for his fans, begging the Berkeley left to make his day, then turning on his heel and walking out, ready for action. Then a sequence of pitched battles, teargas, army helicopters terrifying the crowds, thousands of troops tearing through the campus and the town, shots, screams, twisted bodies, ambulances, blood on the street. The last shot is a funeral march, thousands of kids silently moving up Telegraph Avenue, drenched in tears, faces caved in, a hundred years old.** After we've seen Reagan rejoice in the bloodbath he's about to create, we can only be grateful the body count was so low. But what about the soul count?

I finally reached California at another nadir, just after the campaign of 1972 and the "Christmas Bombing" of Vietnam. On Nixon's Inaugural Day, in January 1973, I went to a "Counter-Inauguration" in San Francisco's Delores Park. It was the most dismal and depressed public event I'd ever been part of. Five hundred of us dragged ourselves like zombies across town, helpless to even imagine anything we could hope for. (The one hopeful thing anybody could think of—which actually meant more than we thought—was that we were still here.) I asked myself, "Can these bones live?" but couldn't answer. And yet, that very minute, unknown to us, Nixon's Ozymandias monument was crumbling—and crumbling not only because of Woodward and Bernstein, not only because of Judge Sirica, not only because of some people in Congress, but *because of us*. Within a few months, page one and prime time were saying so much of what we had been saying for years, not only about the president and his dirty dozen but about America's whole being in the world. And once the Nixon tapes were played back, they showed

* The eruptive rage and hate seemed to just grow, but it turns out that a great deal of it was orchestrated as a self-conscious campaign in Nixon's White House. John Mitchell called it "positive polarization." Pat Buchanan wrote a memo to Nixon that said, "If we tear the country in half, we can pick up the bigger half." For details, see Jonathan Schell, *Time of Illusion*, a book whose data are drawn largely from secret memoranda liberated by Watergate.

** That month Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once* was on the Late Late Show. Its last frames show young Henry Fonda and Sylvia Sidney in a flowery field, seen through a rifle's telescope sight while the state trooper (whom we don't see) waits and waits for his best shot.

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that continuing protests and resistance at home had made a big difference, first in limiting American firepower and finally in pushing the White House to pull out.

The post-Nixon years were a strange time for what I used to call the Slightly Used Left. After throwing up our hands in futility and feeling swamped by despair, we were forced to face the fact that our actions had actually accomplished a lot: you could even say that we had stopped the war. For all our foolishness and self-destructiveness, it turned out we had gotten one very big thing right and played a historical role we could be proud of. All this meant our collective life was better, but weirder, than we had thought. There was no easy way to read it. I remember picking up my old T.S. Eliot:

> After such knowledge, what forgiveness?
> Think now
> History has cunning
> passages, contrived corridors. . . .

So in order to understand our radical achievement in the sixties, we would have to grasp the ironic wisdom of the hated fifties! It was like learning to drive all over again, to get into the rhythm of the irony and absurdity that are the freeways of twentieth-century history. It wasn't easy to learn; we didn't get the flow right away. I believe that the American left really did stop the war. But we were too deeply wounded to enjoy the brief peace or nourish ourselves on it. Meanwhile, the Reagan vanguard took the country for a long ride.

So where, finally, does *Berkeley in the Sixties* take us, and where does it drop us off? The film's second half shows very clearly many of the ways the New Left went wrong. First, that left was rarely able to break out of the cozy isolation of university towns. Next, although it began the sixties with a demand to take American ideals seriously, it seemed to end in super–Third Worldism, embracing every despotic regime that denounced the USA. And though it started with a genuinely integrated mass movement—the reality of "black and white together" is striking in Kitchell's footage—it wound up not merely being involuntarily separated (because blacks wouldn't work with whites any more), but actually celebrating racial polarization. It's hard to know whether blacks listened to anything white radicals said in the late sixties; but if they did, it was a world-class horrific mistake to offer not merely money and support but intense adoration to black men for, as it was said then, "picking up the gun." And after starting the decade with a new agora, where everyone could talk and listen, it ended with pseudo–court-martials (fortunately ineffective) where people condemned each other to death.

All this is true, but Berkeley's radicals were among the first to see it and say it. Its ambience of unrelenting argument and criticism made much of its craziness self-correcting. Its people said and did many idiotic things in the sixties, but the pervasiveness and richness of dialogue there (even for people who adamantly refused to talk) made it harder to do them for long, and easier to come out the other end. As Kitchell's many narrators describe their metamorphoses during and since the sixties, you can see how Berkeley's atmosphere enabled people, some people at least, to grow as wonderfully as the plants.

What always amazed me about Berkeley in the sixties, as I looked on from three thousand miles away, was the way it could support both ecstasy and sanity. Somehow or other, a flamboyantly freaky Dionysian culture and a critical, enlightened, Apollonian politics managed to intertwine. Somehow, this *Chelm* of nervous wrecks, who boasted of their mellowness till they keeled over, managed to mesh in a mass movement that was not only innovative and imaginative (which you would expect), but coherent and disciplined. This synthesis, precarious and fleeting but real, engendered the myth of "Berserkeley," where you could become both wilder and more serious than you started out. Berserkeley radicals specialized in diatribes against liberalism, which—through the cunning of reason—blinded them to the dynamics of their own lives. The whole point of "Berkeley in the Sixties" was to carry the good old liberal pursuit of happiness, and John Stuart Mill's "experiments in living," to a higher plateau: to create new public spaces, and new ways of being in public space, where Americans could "look the negative in the face" and learn to work their (and our) psychic, social, and cultural contradictions through.

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But *did* they learn? Did we collectively learn or grow? Or did we all, Kerrs and Savios alike, short-circuit ourselves before we could make our connection? It surely looks like we missed or lost it, if we look at the crumbling cities we live in now, whose streets are full of homeless and dislocated people, whose twelve-year-old boys get killed for their consumer goods (this year it's "pumps," sneakers that bestow the fairy-tale power to float through the air) and whose six-year-olds are picking up the gun; whose drug traffic is millions of people's only connection to the world economy; whose children increasingly lack the intellectual skills to even get into our knowledge factories, let alone organize and transform them; and whose teachers, instead of using their minds to create space where people can talk about shared troubles and hopes, generate postmod metaphysics and ontologies dedicated to the proposition that we *can't* talk, that we share nothing, that tribal solidarities and tribal hatreds are all there is, world without end, amen.

It's easy for a radical in 1991 to feel swamped by bitterness. It helps to remember a time when people could be just as critical and radical as ourselves—indeed, some of those people *were* ourselves—without drowning in bitterness. These old pictures can evoke a radicalism whose strength lay in its geniality and sweetness, in its intuitive sense of justice, in its faith that history wasn't over and people could make a difference, in its feeling of community—not a longing for community but a feeling that, just underneath our career aspirations and ideological conflicts, a vital community was already there. Intellectuals who came of age then felt a special pride and trust. They didn't think knowledge was impossible; they thought it should be shared. They were confident that, whatever they could learn about people and culture and society, there was a public that wanted to know.

Looking backward, maybe the best way to see Berkeley in the sixties is as a gold mine of *humanism*. Post-sixties (and supposedly "postmodern") intellectuals, in Berkeley and all over, have insisted that this mine was played out: humanism was only a bad dream from which humans should awake. For many years our antihumanists have done most of the talking. What they haven't said is that the real force of their discourse is to give a metaphysical gloss to "interest-group liberalism," that proud parochialism that makes American political culture go. For a little while, the Free Speech Movement offered an alternative model of political culture: expansive, alluring public space where men and women go (and want to go), to look and listen and talk in the open; where extravagant and contradictory ideas can flourish peacefully, like Sproul Plaza's tables; and where, even if we don't find somebody to love, we can learn to recognize each other. At a time when so many Americans are demanding rooms of their own where they can slam the doors, wouldn't it be nice, instead, to press for public spaces generous enough to hold us all? The spirit of Berkeley in the Sixties can help us get our humanistic ideals out of cold storage, set up tables, give our vision a chance to thaw out and grow in the sun. □

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Debates in the Academy

Nat Hentoff

"SPEECH CODES" ON THE CAMPUS

And Problems of Free Speech

During three years of reporting on anti–free-speech tendencies in higher education, I've been at more than twenty colleges and universities—from Washington and Lee and Columbia to Mesa State in Colorado and Stanford.

On this voyage of initially reverse expectations—with liberals fiercely advocating censorship of "offensive" speech and conservatives merrily taking the moral high ground as champions of free expression—the most dismaying moment of revelation took place at Stanford.

In the course of a two-year debate on whether Stanford, like many other universities, should have a speech code punishing language that might wound minorities, women, and gays, a letter appeared in the *Stanford Daily*. Signed by the African-American Law Students Association, the Asian-American Law Students Association, and the Jewish Law Students Association, the letter called for a harsh code. It reflected the letter and the spirit of an earlier declaration by Canetta Ivy, a black leader of student government at Stanford during the period of the grand debate. "We don't put as many restrictions on freedom of speech," she said, "as we should."

Reading the letter by this rare ecumenical body of law students (so pressing was the situation that even Jews were allowed in), I thought of twenty, thirty years from now. From so bright a cadre of graduates, from so prestigious a law school would come some of the law professors, civic leaders, college presidents, and maybe even a Supreme Court Justice of the future. And many of them would have learned—like so many other university students in the land—that censorship is okay provided your motives are okay.

The debate at Stanford ended when the president, Donald Kennedy, following the prevailing winds, surrendered his previous position that once you start telling people what they can't say, you will end up telling them what they can't think. Stanford now has a speech code.

This is not to say that these gags on speech—every one of them so overboard and vague that a student can violate a code without knowing he or she has done so—are invariably imposed by student demand. At most colleges, it is the administration that sets up the code. Because there have been racist or sexist or homophobic taunts, anonymous notes or graffiti, the administration feels it must *do something*. The cheapest, quickest way to demonstrate that it cares is to appear to suppress racist, sexist, homophobic speech.

Usually, the leading opposition among the faculty consists of conservatives—when there is opposition. An exception at Stanford was law professor Gerald Gunther, arguably the nation's leading authority on constitutional law. But Gunther did not have much support among other faculty members, conservative or liberal.

At the University of Buffalo Law School, which has a code restricting speech, I could find just one faculty member who was against it. A liberal, he spoke only on condition that I

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not use his name. He did not want to be categorized as a racist.

On another campus, a political science professor for whom I had great respect after meeting and talking with him years ago has been silent—students told me—on what Justice William Brennan once called "the pall of orthodoxy" that has fallen on his campus.

When I talked to him, the professor said, "It doesn't happen in my class. There's no 'politically correct' orthodoxy here. It may happen in other places at this university, but I don't know about that." He said no more.

One of the myths about the rise of p.c. (political correctness) is that, coming from the left, it is primarily intimidating conservatives on campus. Quite the contrary. At almost every college I've been to, conservative students have their own newspaper, usually quite lively and fired by a muckraking glee at exposing "politically correct" follies on campus.

By and large, those most intimidated—not so much by the speech codes themselves but by the Madame Defarge-like spirit behind them—are liberal students and those who can be called politically moderate.

I've talked to many of them, and they no longer get involved in class discussions where their views would go against the grain of p.c. righteousness. Many, for instance, have questions about certain kinds of affirmative action. They are not partisans of Jesse Helms or David Duke, but they wonder whether progeny of middle-class black families should get scholarship preference. Others have a question about abortion. Most are not pro-life, but they believe that fathers should have a say in whether the fetus should be sent off into eternity.

Jeff Shesol, a recent graduate of Brown, and now a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, became nationally known while at Brown because of his comic strip, "Thatch," which, not too kindly, parodied p.c. students. At a forum on free speech at Brown before he left, Shesol said he wished he could tell the new students at Brown to have no fear of speaking freely. But he couldn't tell them that, he said, advising the new students to stay clear of talking critically about affirmative action or abortion, among other things, in public.

At that forum, Shesol told me, he said that those members of the left who regard dissent from their views as racist and sexist should realize that they are discrediting their goals. "They're honorable goals," said Shesol, "and I agree with them. I'm against racism and sexism. But these people's tactics are obscuring the goals. And they've resulted in Brown no longer being an open-minded place." There were hisses from the audience.

Students at New York University Law School have also told me that they censor themselves in class. The kind of chilling atmosphere they describe was exemplified last year as a case assigned for a moot court competition became subject to denunciation when a sizable number of law students said it was too "offensive" and would hurt the feelings of gay and lesbian students. The case concerned a divorced father's attempt to gain custody of his children on the grounds that their mother had become a lesbian. It was against p.c. to represent the father.

Although some of the faculty responded by insisting that you learn to be a lawyer by dealing with all kinds of cases, including those you personally find offensive, other faculty members supported the rebellious students, praising them for their sensitivity. There was little public opposition from the other students to the attempt to suppress the case. A leading dissenter was a member of the conservative Federalist Society.

What is p.c. to white students is not necessarily p.c. to black students. Most of the latter did not get involved in the N.Y.U. protest, but throughout the country many black students do support speech codes. A vigorous exception was a black Harvard Law School student who spoke during a debate on whether the law school should start punishing speech. A white student got up and said that the codes are necessary because, without them, black students would be driven away from colleges and thereby deprived of the equal opportunity to get an education.

The black student rose and said that the white student had a hell of a nerve to assume that he—in the face of racist speech—would pack up his books and go home. He'd been familiar with that kind of speech all his life,

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and he had never felt the need to run away from it. He'd handled it before and he could again.

The black student then looked at his white colleague and said that it was condescending to say that blacks have to be "protected" from racist speech. "It is more racist and insulting," he emphasized, "to say that to me than to call me a nigger."

But that would appear to be a minority view among black students. Most are convinced they do need to be protected from wounding language. On the other hand, a good many black student organizations on campus do not feel that Jews have to be protected from wounding language.

Though it's not much written about in reports of the language wars on campuses, there is a strong strain of anti-Semitism among some—not all, by any means—black students. They invite such speakers as Louis Farrakhan, the former Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Touré), and such lesser but still burning bushes as Steve Cokely, the Chicago commentator who has declared that Jewish doctors inject the AIDS virus into black babies. That distinguished leader was invited to speak at the University of Michigan.

The black student organization at Columbia University brought to the campus Dr. Khallid Abdul Muhammad. He began his address by saying: "My leader, my teacher, my guide is the honorable Louis Farrakhan. I thought that should be said at Columbia Jewniversity."

Many Jewish students have not censored themselves in reacting to this form of political correctness among some blacks. A Columbia student, Rachel Stoll, wrote a letter to the *Columbia Spectator*: "I have an idea. As a white Jewish American, I'll just stand in the middle of a circle comprising . . . Khallid Abdul Muhammad and assorted members of the Black Students Organization and let them all hurl large stones at me. From recent events and statements made on this campus, I gather this will be a good cheap method of making these people feel good."

At UCLA, a black student magazine printed an article indicating there is considerable truth to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. For months, the black faculty, when asked their reactions, preferred not to comment. One of them did say that the black students already considered the black faculty to be insufficiently militant, and the professors didn't want to make the gap any wider. Like white liberal faculty members on other campuses, they want to be liked—or at least not too disliked.

Along with quiet white liberal faculty members, most black professors have not opposed the speech codes. But unlike the white liberals, many honestly do believe that minority students have to be insulated from barbed language. They do not believe—as I have found out in a number of conversations—that an essential part of an education is to learn to demystify language, to strip it of its ability to demonize and stigmatize you. They do not believe that the way to deal with bigoted language is to answer it with more and better language of your own. This seems very elementary to me, but not to the defenders, black and white, of the speech codes.

Consider University of California president David Gardner. He has imposed a speech code on all the campuses in his university system. Students are to be punished—and this is characteristic of the other codes around the country—if they use "fighting words"—derogatory references to "race, sex, sexual orientation or disability."

The term "fighting words" comes from a 1942 Supreme Court decision, *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, which ruled that "fighting words" are not protected by the First Amendment. That decision, however, has been in disuse at the High Court for many years. But it is thriving on college campuses.

In the California code, a word becomes "fighting" if it is directly addressed to "any ordinary person" (presumably, extraordinary people are above all this). These are the kinds of words that are "inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction, *whether or not they actually do*." (Emphasis added.)

Moreover, he or she who fires a fighting word at any ordinary person can be reprimanded or dismissed from the university because the perpetrator should "reasonably know" that what he or she has said will interfere with the "victim's ability to pursue effectively his or her education

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or otherwise participate fully in university programs and activities."

Asked Gary Murikami, chairman of the Gay and Lesbian Association at the University of California, Berkeley: "What does it mean?"

Among those—faculty, law professors, college administrators—who insist such codes are essential to the university's purpose of making *all* students feel at home and thereby able to concentrate on their work, there has been a celebratory resort to the Fourteenth Amendment.

That amendment guarantees "equal protection of the laws" to all, and that means to all students on campus. Accordingly, when the First Amendment rights of those engaging in offensive speech clash with the equality rights of their targets under the Fourteenth Amendment, the First Amendment must give way.

This is the thesis, by the way, of John Powell, legal director of the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), even though that organization has now formally opposed all college speech codes—after a considerable civil war among and within its affiliates.

The battle of the amendments continues, and when harsher codes are called for at some campuses, you can expect the Fourteenth Amendment—which was not intended to censor *speech*—will rise again.

A precedent has been set at, of all places, colleges and universities, that the principle of free speech is merely situational. As college administrators change, so will the extent of free speech on campus. And invariably, permissible speech will become more and more narrowly defined. Once speech can be limited in such subjective ways, more and more expression will be included in what is forbidden.

One of the exceedingly few college presidents who speaks out on the consequences of the anti–free-speech movement is Yale University's Benno Schmidt:

> Freedom of thought must be Yale's central commitment. It is not easy to embrace. It is, indeed, the effort of a lifetime. . . . Much expression that is free may deserve our contempt. We may well be moved to exercise our own freedom to counter it or to ignore it. But universities cannot censor or suppress speech, no matter how obnoxious in content, without violating their justification for existence . . . .
>
> On some other campuses in this country, values of civility and community have been offered by some as paramount values of the university, even to the extent of superseding freedom of expression.
>
> Such a view is wrong in principle and, if extended, is disastrous to freedom of thought. . . . The chilling effects on speech of the vagueness and open-ended nature of many universities' prohibitions . . . are compounded by the fact that these codes are typically enforced by faculty and students who commonly assert that vague notions of community are more important to the academy than freedom of thought and expression . . . .
>
> This is a flabby and uncertain time for freedom in the United States.

On the Public Broadcasting System in June, I was part of a Fred Friendly panel at Stanford University in a debate on speech codes versus freedom of expression. The three black panelists, including a Stanford student, strongly supported the codes. So did the one Asian-American on the panel. But then so did Stanford law professor, Thomas Grey, who wrote the Stanford code, and Stanford president Donald Kennedy, who first opposed and then embraced the code. We have a new ecumenicism of those who would control speech for the greater good. It is hardly a new idea, but the mix of advocates is rather new.

But there are other voices. In the national board debate at the ACLU on college speech codes, the first speaker—and I think she had a lot to do with making the final vote against codes unanimous—was Gwen Thomas. A black community college administrator from Colorado, she is a fiercely persistent exposer of racial discrimination.

She started by saying, "I have always felt as a minority person that we have to protect the rights of all because if we infringe on the rights of any persons, we'll be next.

"As for providing a nonintimidating educational environment, our young people have to learn to grow up on college campuses. We have to teach them how to deal with adversarial situations. They have to learn how to survive offensive speech they find wounding and hurtful."

Gwen Thomas is an educator—an endangered species in higher education. □

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Reed Way Dasenbrock

THE MULTICULTURAL WEST

Multiculturalism is in the air. The recent movement in American education—both in the schools and in colleges and universities—to incorporate into the curriculum works from non-Western cultures has aroused an exceptional amount of public debate. A cover story in *Newsweek*, long discussions in the *Atlantic* and the *New Republic*, vociferous denunciations from George Will and other conservative intellectuals, even a speech by George Bush touching on the matter—this amounts to an unusual outpouring of attention in a country very little given to debating (or even noticing) intellectual or educational issues. Perhaps it is because we are so out of practice in this matter that the terms of the debate have been so poorly defined.

Opposition to multiculturalism has come most noticeably from the right, and the terms of that opposition seem clear. Our country is part of Western civilization, and it is Western civilization that has given us what is admirable about our society: its democracy, its commitment to due process, its economic and political openness, its technology and high standard of living. The education system plays a crucial role in maintaining our commitment to these values, and we ought to teach a curriculum centered on Western culture precisely for that reason. In an effort not to seem prejudiced, most of those articulating this view add that learning something about other cultures is of course a good idea, but non-Western cultures are *other* cultures; our culture is Western culture.

What has not been sufficiently noticed is how the multiculturalist position shares many of the same presuppositions as this conservative critique of multiculturalism. Multiculturalists also refer to Western culture as a single unified entity; they, too, argue that the foundation of American culture is Western culture. Multiculturalism is called for because it mandates the incorporation of other cultures, the non-Western cultures, into the curriculum alongside (or in some more radical "afrocentric" versions, instead of) the Western culture that has always been taught. Thus, both positions assume that multiculturalism can come into being only by the incorporation of non-Western culture in the curriculum. The status quo ante that conservatives want to preserve, and that multiculturalists want to change, is seen by both as *monoculturalism*: a coherent, univocal entity called Western culture.

I find this a remarkable misreading of European and American history and of the nature of "Western culture." I'm not sure whether the misreading by the "defenders of the West" or by the multiculturalists is more remarkable. In any case, it is this misreading of the nature of Western culture that has allowed the discussion to become so sterile and unproductive. To pay some attention to the history of Western culture, I want to argue, makes our present situation look very different from the way it has been portrayed, far less a unique challenge to our culture (or even a unique opportunity) than another example of something we have faced and faced successfully many times before. For, when looked at with a modest effort of imaginative accuracy, Western culture is itself an example of multiculturalism.

This should be obvious to anyone upon a moment's historical reflection. When we speak of a common Western culture or, more narrowly, of a common European culture, we are speaking of something that took millennia

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to construct and consolidate. There was no common European identity two thousand years ago, just a collection of disparate peoples and cultures ranging from the world's most powerful and sophisticated, the Roman Empire, to the rude Germanic and Celtic peoples of the North. By now, it is those rude, uncivilized people who seem to stand at the center of European culture. Joseph Conrad's brilliant frame for *Heart of Darkness* reminds his British readers of 1900 that Britain, by then the very center of European civilization, was once also a "heart of darkness," considered by its Roman conquerors to lie at the outer edges of civilization.

What created the relative coherence of European culture we see today out of this multiplicity of peoples, cultures, and traditions? Contemporary thinking usually answers, *domination*—assuming that we always go on being ourselves until someone else overpowers us. However, though force undoubtedly played a role, Europe did not take shape primarily through conquest or forcible assimilation. (The Roman Conquest of Britain left a few ruins but had little lasting effect.) It was created primarily by cultural imitation, the mysterious process by which one culture responds to the influence of another. Indeed, the key moment in the creation of a European culture was not the initial sudden emergence of essential Western concepts such as democracy in Athenian Greece. It was, instead, the more gradual process by which another society—Rome—underwent Hellenization and took over Greek ideals and culture as its own. Differences remained, but cultural influence and imitation created a degree of commonality such that we can speak with some accuracy of a shared Graeco-Roman or classical civilization. Virgil thus is in a sense more important in the creation of "Western" culture than Homer precisely because of his acceptance of Homer as a normative ideal. This process of imitation, repeated many times over, gives birth to the essential Western concept that culture is not autochthonous, that it comes from somewhere else: from the East, if one is a Midwesterner or Westerner; from Europe, if one is American or Russian or Australian; from the Continent, if one is British; from the Mediterranean, if one is Nordic; from Greece, if one was Roman. Culture thus is not what we do but usually what someone else does better than we do. This relation is always double-edged: the provincial side both resents and admires the sophisticated side in the relationship. But there is never any ambiguity about which is the sophisticated side: it is, simply, the side that is the object of imitation over the long term.

Now this sense of culture as something learned, something constructed, something that we share with and take from others, is in quite sharp contrast to the anthropological sense of culture as the ensemble of practices of a given community. The difference is between a normative or prescriptive and a descriptive concept. Culture in the normative sense is what we ought to do; for an anthropologist culture is what a given people do. The anthropological sense seems to govern the current use of the term among multiculturalists, particularly in their assumption that it is important to "preserve" the culture of minority students. African Americans should study African and African American literature to maintain their own cultural identity as African Americans, and it is partly for this reason that it is deemed important to have African Americans—not members of other groups—teaching these subjects. Yet the educational practice urged on the society as a whole by multiculturalists is deeply Virgilian. Multiculturalists urge members of the mainstream culture to learn about other cultures so that we can learn from them as well as learn about them. Diversity in the curriculum is seen as important because other cultures have traits to learn from; the project is for our students and our society to become more multicultural, not simply to be more informed about other cultures. And if we are to become more multicultural, then we must consciously become a combination of what we wish to retain from our culture and what we wish to adopt from that of others. We must become like Virgil. And it is for the same reason that this project is also resisted so strongly: those opposed to multiculturalism are just as Virgilian, insisting that we should model

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ourselves on the models we have long imitated, not on "alien" traditions and ways of being.

However, those on both sides who present Western culture and multiculturalism as if they were opposed options miss what I would call the fundamental multiculturalism of Western culture, the fact that it has been constructed out of a fusion of disparate and often conflicting cultural traditions. The straw man of the multicultural polemics is now the dead white European male or the Anglo; only twenty years ago the straw man of comparable polemics was the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Whatever happened to the WASP?

In just one generation, it would seem, the once crucial distinctions between Protestant and Catholic, between Protestant and Jew, between Anglo-Saxons and other European ethnic groups have ceased to matter: all of these groups are seen to be part of a homogeneous "eurocentric" tradition. But these internal barriers inside the "Western tradition" in America did not go away magically or easily, any more than the internal barriers inside of Europe did. One might remind anyone glibly referring to "the European tradition" (as if it were a harmonious whole) of the long conflict from 1914 to 1945 (or really from about 1500 to 1945) concerning who was to dominate Europe; one might remind anyone glibly talking about a homogeneous Anglo culture in the United States of the intense resistance, as recently as 1960, to the election of the Irish Catholic John F. Kennedy to the presidency. If we can talk about European unity or about a certain unified "Anglo" culture in this country, it is only as a result of a long historical process of knocking down the walls that have separated the different European communities. And that process is not complete even today.

The wall that multiculturalist slogans create between *just one* Western culture and non-Western culture thus reflects a kind of amnesia. Moreover, the disparate elements out of which "Western culture" has been created are themselves often non-Western in origin. One of the loci of the recent debates has been the argument advanced in Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* and elsewhere that classical Greek culture is deeply indebted to Egyptian (and therefore to "black") culture. The debate here is really about the extent to which Egyptian culture can be said to be African. For there is no disputing the obvious debt of Hellenic culture to ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern cultures. However the details of this particular controversy sort out, the imitativeness of Western culture—its ability to learn from cultures outside the West as well as from other places inside the West—has obviously been one of its constitutive features. We might broaden T. S. Eliot's dictum and say that "immature cultures borrow, mature cultures steal."

After all, if the heritage of classical civilization is one key strand in Western culture, the second key strand would have to be Christianity. For it was really Christianity, not the classical heritage, which cemented a sense of European identity: the fundamental affirmation of European identity has come from Europeans defining themselves as Christian in opposition to cultures that were seen as heathen or pagan. Yet this is deeply paradoxical. Is Christianity a Western or European religion? Its birthplace is undoubtedly "Eastern" and non-European, and it stands in close relation to other religions seen clearly as non-Western and "other," particularly Zoroastrianism and Islam, or whose status in this cultural geography is problematic, particularly Judaism. If one master concept could be said to crystallize a Western mind-set, it is probably not democracy—which so many European countries managed to do without for so long—as much as monotheism. Monotheism allowed us to justify conquest of the "pagan" and "idolatrous" countries of the non-Western world; it also, by removing the sacred from the natural world to a metaphysical realm, justifies thinking of the natural world as something to be used, transformed, and conquered. Yet monotheism is an indigenous notion nowhere in Europe. It was introduced to Europe by Christianity, but derived immediately from Judaism, and ultimately from Zoroastrianism. This helps to explain why, if classical civilization and Christianity are the two most important strands or constitutive elements of Western culture, it took an immense synthesizing labor

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across centuries to bring them into some sort of harmony. Dante, Spenser, and Milton—in seeking to fuse classical culture with Christianity—are thus in a sense just as multicultural as Virgil was, and if we fail to realize this immediately, we are only testifying to how successful their work of assimilation was.

Finally, the third key element in any definition of Western culture would have to be science and technology. This is crucial both for the monoculturalist praise of the West (Jacob Neusner's insistence that "we are what the rest of the world wants to be") and the multiculturalist critique, which tends to find in other cultures a saner because more respectful attitude towards nature. Yet Western science and technology (whether we think it a good or a bad thing) is no more exclusively Western than Western religion. Even if much of it comes from the Greeks, they took their astronomy from the Sumerians and Egyptians, and we only know about much of Greek science because of the Arab role in transmitting it. It is hard to imagine "Western" science without the Chinese invention of gunpowder, rockets, and printing, without the Indian and Arab contributions to mathematics, and without the key Arab discovery of how to sail upwind.

Consider, for a final example, the "Western calendar," now sometimes resisted for imposing a common "eurocentric" grid on the world. How many elements enter into a date such as Thursday, August 15, 1991? The name of the day comes from a Norse God, the name of the month from a Roman emperor. The year comes (approximately) from the date of Christ's birth, so is Christian in inspiration, but the numerical system is Arabic (and ultimately Indian) in inspiration. Nor is this hybridization and syncretism anything uniquely Western. For many of the world's central cultures are multicultural in the sense I am describing, made up of complex mixtures of local and borrowed elements. Even when we can find someone located univocally in what seems to be a homogeneous culture, a historical perspective shows how that culture was itself formed at some earlier point out of a multicultural context. The way in which successive European cultures rewrote the Homeric epics to trace their own history back to Greece is paralleled by the successive rewriting of the Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, in Southeast Asia. Indian culture is a complex mixture of indigenous Hindu and imported Muslim elements, and Islam has been a profound influence on the culture of much of Africa. Our current models of culture all seem to be either/or (eurocentric vs. afrocentric, Western vs. non-Western, monocultural vs. multicultural), but culture itself is both/and, not either/or. Multiculturalism is simply the standard human condition.

Now, nothing I have said so far should be controversial. I have recalled some basic historical facts. Yet the facts should lead us to see the debate about multiculturalism in an unexpected light. The choice cannot be between a closed Western tradition and openness to other non-Western traditions, for the Western tradition itself has always been open—if not always prone to admit that it is—to other cultural traditions. If you changed into or out of pajamas, took a bath, brushed your teeth, or had a cup of tea or coffee this morning, each of these activities is something we have taken from Asia. If, say, William Bennett's attitudes toward other cultures had always been dominant in the West, we would still be worshipping Zeus and trying to use Roman numerals. The very spirit of the West when it encounters another cultural practice is to say, "Is there something we can use here?" Is tobacco good to smoke? Is coffee good to drink? Is chocolate good to eat? Not every borrowing has been wise, but by and large Western culture has been immeasurably enriched by its ability to adapt to and borrow from others.

If this history teaches us anything, it is that crises of multiculturalism have deep historical roots and cannot be wished away. Early mediaeval England was a country riven by a schism between the indigenous culture and language of the Anglo-Saxons and the imported culture and French language of the conquering Normans: what resulted was the hybrid language of English and a profoundly hybrid and syncretic culture. Multiculturalism has

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emerged in the United States today out of a comparable historical exigency. On the one hand, we are faced with a new wave of immigration into the United States: our country is becoming less European, less white, more Asian and more Latin American. Europe, having for decades felt smug and superior about racial problems and tensions in America, is faced with the same phenomenon and is—if anything—considerably less prepared to deal with it. On the other hand, we and every other trading nation are faced with an increasingly integrated world, above all an increasingly integrated international economy, in which we can no longer pretend to separate ourselves from other nations. Borders are now gates, not walls, through which pour problems—drugs and too many Toyotas—but also essential ingredients such as oil. Most important, across borders now pour people. And each of these tendencies is likely to become more pronounced, not less, for the foreseeable future. How do we respond to the complex interaction of cultures that shapes the contemporary world?

My answer may seem paradoxical: we need to adopt a good deal of the multiculturalist agenda precisely because it is in keeping with the best and most important aspects of Western and American culture. The great moments of our historical tradition have been moments of contact with and borrowing from other cultures: a good deal of what was important about the Middle Ages was prompted by contact with Islamic civilization; Greek exiles in Italy helped spark the Renaissance, as did the discovery of the New World; the discovery of the spiritual traditions of Asia played an important role in British and particularly American Romanticism. Our historical situation is perhaps more complex than any of these, since we are now in contact with the entire world through immigration and trade, but it is nevertheless a situation these examples will help us to understand. When faced with disparate cultures in contact (which usually means conflict), the successful response has always been assimilative and syncretic, to mix and match, taking the best of each. We now need to do this with the totality of the cultures of the world. But this doesn't represent a surrender of the Western tradition as much as a reaffirmation of it.

If this is what we need to do, how can we do it responsibly? Once we see the fundamental continuity between multiculturalism today and earlier moments in our history, the polemical anti-Western thrust of much multiculturalist rhetoric seems absurdly out of place, as does that side of multiculturalism seeking to "preserve" the culture of minority students by focusing their curriculum on their own culture. It is empty posturing to pretend to choose non-Western culture over Western culture when our task is to harmonize them and choose the best of both. To see the choice as one between eurocentrism and afrocentrism is to deny the very possibility of multiculturalism. The afrocentric curriculum being advocated by some black intellectuals and implemented in some school systems is both impractical and no more multicultural than the suggestions of William Bennett and George Will. Moreover, this way of framing the issue ignores the degree of acculturation already undergone by minorities in this country. Most African Americans are no more culturally African than I am culturally German.

In any case, the thought of what could happen when hundreds of thousands of not very well-informed—even if well-intentioned—school teachers and college professors are turned loose on the cultures of the world is enough to make anyone cringe, and certainly what passes for multiculturalism in the nation's schools is often shallow, misinformed, and intellectually shoddy. In kindergarten, my son brought home some nationally disseminated materials about Columbus Day that made an attempt (obviously influenced by multiculturalism) to show something about pre-contact Native American culture as well as the usual stuff about the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. But the worksheet identified Columbus as landing in Bermuda, not the Bahamas; when I pointed this out to his teacher, she asked me what the difference was. This year in first grade, a whole section on Native American culture followed, so rife with misinformation and clichés that the children wouldn't have

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been much worse off just playing cowboys and Indians. I would be astonished if the new afrocentric schools conveyed a much more accurate sense of what African culture is really like. The point here is that even the best intentions are not enough, that misinformed teaching can in fact reinforce the stereotypes and prejudices it is attempting to move beyond. Moreover, given the spirit of guardianship for these cultures dominating the attempts to represent them in the curriculum, it is unlikely that anything but a sanitized, idealized portrait of these cultures could emerge, even though it is precisely such a portrait of Western culture that multiculturalism objects to.

So a responsible and responsive multiculturalism is not going to take shape overnight. We are in for a period of experimentation, and we can only hope that more complex models and pedagogies slowly emerge and replace the simplistic visions and responses of both sides in the current debate. To anyone searching in the interim for what such a multiculturalism would look like, my advice is to read contemporary non-Western literature written in English, which seems to me to be a crucial site where we can move toward a more sophisticated sense of the world's cultures. English is an international language, playing an important role inside about one fourth of the world's one hundred and sixty countries, and it has therefore become an important international literary language. Important—great—writing is being done in English all over the world, on every continent today. But this body of literature has not yet played an important role in the curriculum at any level, since it doesn't seem English or American enough to make it into the English curriculum, or "different enough" to make it into those parts of the curriculum concerned with other cultures. In this context, that is precisely its virtue. The writers themselves are often attacked from both sides, precisely because they don't fit into one camp or the other, as the case of Salman Rushdie has shown most spectacularly. In fact, the discussion about "afrocentricity" took shape first in literary criticism when critics such as Chinweizu attacked Wole Soyinka and other African writers for their "euromodernism." Yet the bridges these writers are building, by importing European forms into non-European contexts and by introducing non-European cultural traditions into European languages, may in retrospect seem as crucial to the formation of a world culture as the Augustan imitation of Greek culture was for the formation of classical culture and the Renaissance imitation of those classical forms and of Italian culture was for the construction of European culture.

I believe the construction of a world culture—as Wyndham Lewis said over forty years ago and V. S. Naipaul has recently reiterated—is the task that now faces us. Despite the fashionable nostalgia for pockets of difference yet unintegrated into a world community, the alternative to such a world culture is not a lively diversity of cultures as much as unending conflict among them. Will pointing this out magically transform the current debate into a less shrill one? Of course not, for there are powerful reasons why each side in this debate wants not to understand the other. On the one hand, advocates of a separatist cultural identity for minorities reserve their harshest criticism for those of their own communities like Naipaul or Richard Rodriguez who insist that a measure of assimilation is inevitable, that accommodation must be a two-way street. Ayatollah Khomeini's condemnation of Salman Rushdie is the most conspicuous exemplification of this rage: that one of "us" could be "polluted" by contact with the other side. On the other hand, a George Will or a William Bennett finds it hard to admit that the West might have something to learn from as well as something to teach the rest of the world.

My point is not just that both sides hold to blindingly narrow ideals. It is rather that neither side perceives the world in which we live. Despite all of the talk on both sides about preserving earlier cultural identities, these identities are changing quickly and inexorably. It is in this sense that—despite the apparent polarization of the debate—the two sides are really one. Together, they represent a point of view that is historically irrelevant. □

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Alexander Stille

A PEOPLE UNDER TERROR

Italian Jews During World War II

We print below an excerpt from Benevolence and Betrayal,* *an extremely rich portrayal of the fate of the Italian Jews during the Second World War. By showing the varying fates of several Italian Jewish families, Alexander Stille, a gifted young writer of Italian descent, has provided a valuable record of a tragic experience.*

Mussolini's regime was at first relatively tolerant toward the Jews, some of whom declared themselves "loyal citizens." By 1938, however, under pressure from his ally Hitler, Mussolini announced a new set of "racial laws." During the war a large percentage of the Italian Jews were deported to concentration camps in Germany and Poland; only a few returned home. In the pages below, Stille traces the story of a Jewish family in the ghetto of Rome.

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In Rome, the circle was closing rapidly on the Jews hiding throughout the city. The Italian puppet government installed a new chief of the Rome police, Pietro Caruso, who pursued the search for Jews with quickened vigor. In his first month on the job, February 1944, the number of Jews arrested in the city jumped from 29 to 141. And in March the number climbed further to 163.

The hopes of an immediate Allied victory had faded. Although they were only about sixty kilometers from Rome, American troops were bogged down for the winter in the treacherous mountainous country at Cassino in a stand-off that seemed to last forever.

With the Germans settling in for a long occupation, many Italians began reconsidering their options. Hunger was rampant in the city. Hard-line Italian fascists crawled out from hiding and were on the ascendant; the temptation to make several thousand lire by selling Jews to the police became too much for some people.

Throughout those months the family of Enrico Di Veroli moved from house to house and convent to convent, staying a step or two ahead of the Germans and the neofascists. Having narrowly escaped arrest while staying at their relatives' house in Trastevere, the family went to stay in a convent near the Ponte Rotto. "After about ten days we had to escape from there because someone told the Germans that we were there. In this convent there were, along with Jews, a number of soldiers and officers who had escaped from the Italian army. The people in the convent tried to help us as much as possible but they had to send us away."

After leaving the convent in the middle of the night, the family found refuge with another former client of their store, who lived in Via Porta Settimiana. "They opened their house to us, they gave us their bedrooms. There's no way around it, the people of Rome opened their hearts to us. Some did it out of self-interest, but a lot of them out of pure generosity. What little they had, they shared with us. We were well there, we stayed a few months, but then one day my father saw some people being arrested right under the windows of the house and he became afraid."

Olga Di Verdi recalls that period as a string of adventures, escapes, and disasters. "After

* *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism*, by Alexander Stille. New York: Summit Books, 1991. © 1991 by Alexander Stille.

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October 16, I began writing something down in my own fashion and my father said to me: 'What do you want to write down? These are days you'll never forget as long as you live.' And so it's been."

From that hideaway, the family decided to find a place in another convent or monastery. Olga's brothers, Michele and Gianni, didn't like the idea of going into a monastery and, instead, left Rome to join the antifascist resistance. "I didn't want to go into any convent," says Michele, Enrico's son. "I didn't want to die like a mouse in a trap. The Germans raided some of the convents. If you have to die, better to die with rifle in hand. That's the way I am."

Michele and Gianni went to a partisan formation in the hills of Lazio led by Giorgio Costanzo. Their main task was to recover parachutes dropped by Allied aircraft and give aid to American and British paratroopers. "Every day, a new episode," Michele says. "We were constantly on the move, trying to avoid a round-up." Fighting alongside his brother, rather than being a source of comfort, Michele says, only made things worse. "It was a time of constant fear. To be at war with your own brother is the worst thing imaginable. What happens if your brother dies alongside of you? What do you do? Shoot yourself?"

The rest of the family—Enrico, his wife, Grazia, and their two younger daughters, Olga and Flora—found a place to stay in buildings connected to the parish church of San Benedetto. There, they met up with Attilio Di Veroli and his entire family of seven as well as Michele Di Veroli, son of Umberto, known as Monsieur Macaroni.

Not long after this reunion, on March 3 the church of San Benedetto was hit by an Allied bomb—one of the few that fell on Rome during the war. "I had gone out to get some bread, and as I was coming back I hear this explosion and a whole wing of the convent just collapsed," recalls Rosa Di Veroli. "Luckily, no one was killed. But they said: 'Everyone has to leave.' "

Michele Di Veroli was immediately able to find another place in a monastery but the other Di Verolis were not so lucky. "After the bombing, we wanted to stay in another convent but they wanted money, something like 200 lire a day, which we didn't have. Michele went and we had to move from here to there to try to save ourselves."

Having nowhere else to go, Rosa's family went with her uncle Enrico Di Veroli and his family to their store back in the ghetto for several days. So the ten of them lived in the two-room store with no kitchen, bathroom, or running water. "There was a concierge at a building nearby on Via Arenula who at night would bring us a bottle of water that we had to use for all our needs, for drinking, cooking, and washing," says Olga Di Veroli. "There were some friends who had a store nearby who would let us know when it was okay to go out and who brought us things that we needed."

But remaining in the ghetto at this point was untenable and the two families left and split up after four or five days. At the end of their resources, Rosa and her family found themselves back in the old Theater of Marcellus, the ancient amphitheatre just next to the ghetto where the Jews from the neighborhood had been rounded up on October 16 before being taken away in trucks. "We were sitting there in the ruins the whole day because we had nowhere else to go," Rosa remembers. "In the evening we would try to find somewhere to sleep, sometimes in the open air."

One day on the street, their father ran into an acquaintance whom he persuaded to take in his family for a while. "We ate bread and lettuce, which we dressed with the salty liquid that come from anchovy cans." To collect a few lire a day, Attilio Di Veroli had taken up his old itinerant life, making the round of the city's churches, collecting used furniture, fixing things, receiving an occasional handout. Because he was blind in one eye, he took his fifteen-year-old son Michele with him.

"One day we had an appointment to meet my father and brother at the Teatro Marcello and when he didn't show up we knew they had been taken," Rosa recalls. "It was the eighteenth of March 1944."

Although they do not know for sure, Rosa and her family suspect they were turned in by the seamstress with whom they were staying at the time. "It's only an idea; we have no proof," says Rosa. "But I never had a good

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feeling about that place. One morning when my sister and I were sleeping we heard the woman's little boy playing with a German soldier. And the morning my father was arrested the woman told us: 'Don't all go out together.' So my sisters, my mother, and I went out alone and we never saw my father and brother again; that's why we suspected her. That evening we were afraid to go back there. Luckily, we were able to find a place to stay in a convent near the Teatro Marcello.

"The next day, March 19, was a national holiday, the day of Saint Joseph. My sister, my older sister, Silvia, and I went to Via Tasso [the site of Gestapo headquarters] and I said: 'I am an Italian citizen; you have arrested my father and I want to bring him something.' 'Are you Jewish?' one of them asked. 'Yes,' I said. And they told me to go look in Regina Coeli prison. And we went there and brought him food. We brought him food every day. We were afraid, but we wanted to know and at that point I didn't care. I was always the most reckless of the family."

Every day after her father's arrest, Rosa would appear at Regina Coeli to bring him something to eat, something to supplement the meager prison rations. But on the morning of March 24, when she arrived at the prison gates, the guards told Rosa that her father and brother were no longer there and they had no idea where they had been taken.

Rosa, however, had her own suspicions.

The previous day, March 23, 1944, a bomb had exploded in Via Rasella while a convoy of German soldiers was passing, killing thirty-two German soldiers. It had been set by partisans. Because the Germans were well known for their threat of killing ten Italians for every German murdered, the city trembled at the prospect of a massive retaliation.

"We knew the day of the attack at Via Rasella that they had taken some Jews," Rosa says. "We knew that for every German, ten people would be killed. But instead of killing 320, they killed more."

The story quickly circulated through the city that the Germans had taken a large group of Italians, mostly antifascists being held in the Rome prisons, to the Ardeatine Caves just outside the city. Chained together in groups of three, they were led into the caves, made to kneel down, and shot in the back of the head. When the killing was done—it took several hours—the Germans exploded dynamite at the caves' entrance to hide the evidence of their crime.

No one knew the names of the people who had been killed. Not long after the massacre, Rosa and her older sister, Silvia, ventured back into the ghetto area to get some bread. Although it was dangerous to return to the old Jewish quarter, the baker knew them there and made sure they got something to eat. As they were leaving, Rosa saw an old childhood friend, Celeste Di Porto, with whom she had gone to elementary school. Known as "Stella" (meaning "Star"), because of her beauty, Celeste was from another of the large, old ghetto families. During the German occupation, however, Celeste had become the city's most lethal German informant, turning in about fifty Jews from the ghetto. Standing on the bridge between the ghetto and Trastevere, she would finger people as they walked by. In this period, the beautiful dark-haired Celeste earned a new nickname: "La Pantera Nera," the Black Panther.

"I saw her and I thought, 'Mamma mia, if they get us?' It was enough for her to make a sign and they would have grabbed us. I got up my courage—I had been to school with her—and said: 'Ciao, Celeste, how are you? You, who know so much, do you know what's happened to my father and brother?' 'They're fine,' she said. 'They're with my cousin.' Silvia and I started walking off, when suddenly I hear her call me, 'Rosa.' And I said to myself: 'Oh, God, she's going to get me.' 'Listen,' she told me, 'stay out of sight for a few days.' And we went away."

To find out more about her father and brother, Rosa called her old employer (and distant cousin) Renato Di Veroli, who was hidden inside the Vatican City. "He had been able to see a list of the victims, and Attilio Di Veroli and Michele Di Veroli were on the list. He [Renato] had a brother named Attilio Di Veroli and thought it might be him. But I was sure it was my father.

"Celeste had said they were 'fine,' they were 'with her cousin,' and in fact they were with

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her cousin, dead at the Ardeatine Caves. A couple of days after the massacre I went out to the caves to look. I got a ride on a garbage truck. But I couldn't see a thing.

"It was dangerous to move around this way, but I had a certain strength that came from the fact that I didn't give a crap anymore. There were certain things that needed to be done."

Of the 335 men killed in the Ardeatine Caves, 77 were Jews, all of them, like Attilio and Michele Di Veroli, nonpolitical Jews who simply happened to be in the Rome prison at the time of the ambush. They served to round out the number so that the Germans could maintain their ten-to-one quota. Twenty-six of the Jews who died in the massacre are believed to have been turned in by the Black Panther.

Lazzaro Anticoli, a young street peddler arrested the morning of the massacre, managed to scribble a note before being dragged off to the caves: "If I never see my family again, it is the fault of that sellout Celeste Di Porto. Avenge me." According to Italian historian Silvio Bertoldi, Anticoli's name was added at the last minute, replacing that of Celeste Di Porto's brother. The Black Panther's own father was so deeply ashamed by his daughter's betrayal that he turned himself into the Germans and died in a concentration camp.

Among the Jews killed at the Ardeatine Caves was Aldo Finzi, former undersecretary of the interior and a member of the first Fascist Grand Council. Naturally, Finzi had been among the "discriminated" Jews, those granted exemptions for their patriotic contributions. But this counted little with the Germans. The majority of the victims, however, were ghetto Jews with typically Roman last names such as Di Consiglio, Di Veroli, Di Porto, and Funaro. The youngest was Rosa's little brother, Michele, who had celebrated his fifteenth birthday the month before his death.

"My mother continued to delude herself that they would come back, that there had been a mix-up, and maybe they had exchanged clothes and documents with other people," says Rosa. "She got this idea in her head."

Olga and Flora, together with their mother, moved into a convent of Philippian Sisters on Via Cicerone. Despite the dangers of the German occupation, the women continued to move freely about the city during the day. They wanted, especially, to remain in contact with Enrico Di Veroli, who was staying with friends. To stay locked in a room, with no news of the family, was more than they could bear.

Sometimes Enrico and his wife, Grazia, would walk arm in arm through the city. With spring weather beginning to warm the city and Allied troops inching daily closer and closer to Rome, the future was beginning to look brighter. On the afternoon of April 25, 1944, Enrico Di Veroli was walking his wife back to the convent, when he heard someone call his name. "My mother, who was holding him by the arm, said she remembers feeling my father jump," Olga says. " 'Don't turn around,' my father said to her. 'Di Veroli, Di Veroli.' Finally, my father turned around and said: 'My name is Niccolata Rita' [the false name he was going by]. The man, who was with another guy, was a client of our store who had lost an arm in World War I. My father had loaned him a thousand lire. 'Enrico, don't play games with me. Don't you remember, you gave a thousand lire of merchandise on credit. I'm supposed to pay you back one hundred lire a day. See, here's your signature on this receipt.' My father said: 'That's okay, it can wait until the end of the war.' But the man said, 'You have to come with us.' My father said: 'Don't hurt me, I have a family.' 'What hurt? We're just taking you in for questioning.' "

As they dragged off Enrico Di Veroli, a fracas ensued. His wife was thrown to the ground, knocked unconscious, and lost several teeth. Luckily, several women who were watching the incident came to her aid. Because the melée occurred in front of the convent where the Di Verolis were staying, the women, without knowing where she lived, picked her off the pavement and carried her to the convent.

When Olga and her sister Flora returned that evening, they found their mother in a strange state. "She was laughing and laughing. My sister said: 'Look, how happy mother is. Maybe something has happened, maybe Silvia [their older sister] has been freed.' 'No,' I said, 'I don't think she's happy. She seems nervous.' We finally learned that my father had been

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arrested. We tried to shake Mama a bit, but we couldn't get her to stop laughing. So we went up to a woman hiding in the convent whom we knew to be Jewish, also. We explained what had happened, and said, 'My mother seems half-crazy.' The woman came and gave my mother a hard slap across the face. Mamma stopped laughing and starting crying.

"That evening the Mother Superior came up to me and said, 'Listen, Carmela' (that was the false name I went under), 'you should have told me you were Jewish.' I said: 'If you want us to go, we'll leave immediately.' 'No, it's not that, we just need to know so that if they were to come for you, we can take you down a secret passageway.' They were incredibly good and courteous to us. After that episode they even insisted on bringing us our meals in our room so that we would be seen as little in public as possible. They were afraid of informants."

After her father's arrest, Olga and her family developed contacts in the Rome prison that allowed them to keep up a clandestine correspondence. "We had a system of communication, slipping notes inside the clean laundry or inside the packages of food," Olga says. "Using the same method, he was able to send us back a couple of notes."

Particularly striking in Enrico Di Veroli's letters is the degree of concern for others at a time when he himself was in constant mortal danger.

> Dear Grazina, May 15, 1944
>
> You cannot imagine how much pleasure I had receiving your letter of the 12th and in receiving good news and knowing that you all are well.
>
> I beg you not to worry, that I am well and I feel strong and full of courage because I have hope that all will end soon and we will be able to embrace one another in perfect health.

Although full of spelling and punctuation mistakes, the letters are written in a shrewdly constructed code in order to avoid identifying friends and relatives. At one point he writes: "I hope that Misses Michelina Rita and Gianna Rita study hard and never tire, succeed at their exams, and listen to the advice of Professor Resciude and pass their exams." The Misses "Michelina and Gianna Rita" are in fact his sons, Michele and Gianni; the last name "Rita" is the false name the family had been going under. The "Professor Resciude" to whom he refers was a fictional invention; although he spelled it incorrectly, the word "resciudde" in Judeo-romanesque dialect means "beat it" or "get lost"; so that by urging his sons to "study hard" and "listen to the advice of Professor Resciude" Enrico Di Veroli was telling them to lie low and stay out of sight.

His concerns run from the practical ("Don't send cooked meat, it goes bad, send hard-boiled eggs instead") to salutations to friends he has left behind: "Give my greetings to all those who ask of me. . . ." His most strongly desired wish is that his family write him immediately [adding a second "b" to the world "subito" (immediately) to stress its importance]: "I beg you to answer me immediately so that I can be at peace."

On May 20 the Allies finally broke the stalemate at Monte Cassino and began the final offensive that would soon culminate in the liberation of Rome. But the day after Cassino fell, the Germans loaded 281 Jews into a train headed for the detention camp at Fossoli. Prisoner number 175 on the list was Enrico Di Veroli.

Two weeks later, on June 4, when Rome was liberated, Enrico Di Veroli was at the transit camp in Fossoli, near Modena—an area that would have to wait another nine months for the end of the war. On June 16, from Fossoli, Enrico managed to get another letter to his wife, through a Catholic friend in Rome.

Written a few days before his deportation, this letter is much more full of foreboding: "Up till now I have been at Fossoli, and we do not know what fate awaits us." Nonetheless, he takes great pains to reassure his family and keep them from worrying: "I want you to know that I am well and that I am ready for whatever the future holds in store." And yet, at moments, he writes with the stoic concern of a man trying to wrap up his affairs and take leave of the world. "I beg you all to be good, calm and to always get along, and to take the best possible care of Mamma, to pick up the stuff from Sig. Riso and that of all the others . . . so that when I return I find all in good order, and if by some chance I should be delayed a bit not to despair and to remain calm."

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Even at this late date, he does not appear to have grasped the full extent of the Germans' "final solution." Writing hopefully of his eldest daughter, Silvia, arrested with her husband and children on October 16, he says: "I have had news that Silvia and all the others are in Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia and that we can write her through the International Red Cross."

One of Enrico Di Veroli's principal concerns is that the family find ways of thanking and repaying the Catholic friends who have helped them in this time of calamity. He explains how one friend, a certain Gasparini, went all the way from Rome to Fossoli in order to give him a thousand lire. "Be sure," he urges his family, "never to forget as long as you should live the great and good action of this man . . . in fact I beseech you as soon as you have received this letter to go and thank him and repay him all I owe him."

Ten days later, a convoy of roughly one thousand Jews left Fossoli for Auschwitz. Only 275 were admitted to the camp to work as laborers; the other 750—including Enrico Di Veroli—were gassed immediately. Out of the group of one thousand, only 32 would return after the war.

Like his Uncle Attilio and Uncle Enrico and their families, Michele Di Veroli (Umberto's son) was forced to find a new hiding place after the bombing of the San Benedetto church.

"I moved to the Angelo Mai Institute [a religious institute belonging to the Catholic church], where about a hundred Jews were hiding. And from there I went to the Palazzo Laterense, through Monsignor Tercole, a friend of my father's. It was not easy to get into the Palazzo Laterense. Because my father had lots of Catholic friends I was always fortunate to be able to find hiding places in churches and convents. My Uncle Attilio had much more trouble.

"They needed to be certain about the people they let in to the Palazzo Laterense. Because there were a lot of important Italian soldiers and antifascists there, people who became important political figures after the liberation. They even had a radio transmitter there. This radio transmitted war news to the Americans and the English. I sometimes had to do guard duty at night on the roof because they were constantly watching out for a possible raid by the Germans the way they did at the basilica of Saint Paul's [which the Germans broke into, arresting numerous Jews and antifascists]."

Michele (Umberto's son) was posing as a Neapolitan student named Michele Capuiano who had been stranded in Rome behind the battle lines. "I had gotten the false documents through friends who knew someone in one of the government ministries. The people at the convent never tried to convert me. I can only say good things about the people there. They tried to help in every way possible.

In the convent at Via Cicerone after her father's arrest, Olga, her sister, and mother spent the remaining days of the German occupation listening to the artillery shells coming closer to Rome and trying to avoid a last minute capture.

Of the original nucleus of thirty-three Di Veroli family members—the four brothers and their children—some ten were either deported to Auschwitz or killed at the Ardeatine Caves. Giuditta and Silvia [sisters] were the only two to return. There were 353 Di Verolis listed in the 1938 census; 77 were deported during the German occupation, 8 returned. Not included in this total are the five grandchildren and the two sons-in-law who were also arrested and deported. Nor does it include the dozens of other cousins, aunts, uncles, cousins-once-and-twice removed on the maternal side of the family. The Di Verolis, however, were in no way exceptional. Out of the estimated eight thousand Jews present in Rome at the moment of the German occupation, about a fourth were captured. Of the 2,091 deportees, 1,067 were men, 743 were women, and 281 were children. Of the 2,091 deported, roughly one in twenty survived: 73 men and 28 women. □

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John Roemer

MARKET SOCIALISM: A BLUEPRINT

How Such an Economy Might Work

Since the fall from power of the ruling parties in Eastern Europe during the amazing events of autumn 1989, most commentators in the West and the East have proclaimed the death of communism. If communism is defined as consisting of the dictatorship of a single party, the administrative and central allocation of most resources and commodities, and the ownership of all firms by the state, then I agree with the diagnosis. The inference that these commentators implicitly make is that socialism, too, is a dead letter. I will argue here for the feasibility of market socialism, a politico-economic system in which firms are publicly owned, the state has considerable control of the "commanding heights" of the economy, and there is democratic control over society's use of its economic surplus.

The failed "communist" experiment was characterized by the following three features:

(1) public or state ownership of the means of production,
(2) noncompetitive (that is, single-party) politics, and
(3) command/administrative allocation of resources and commodities.

The inference that those proclaiming the death of socialism have drawn is that, because (1), (2), and (3) imply economic failure, therefore *all* of (1) through (3) must be negated to achieve a successful economic system. That is bad logic: all we can infer from the failure of (1)+(2)+(3) is that at least one of the three characteristics must be changed to achieve economic success. What I outline below is an economic mechanism in which (2) and (3) are indeed negated—there will be democratic, competitive politics and market allocation of most commodities and resources, but public ownership of the principal means of production is maintained. Put slightly differently, my claim is that markets are necessary to achieve an efficient and vigorous economy but that private ownership is not necessary for the successful operation of markets. It is the failure of both the right and the left to separate the concepts of private ownership and market allocation that has led to the premature obituaries of the socialism.

Components of Market Socialism

The viability of market socialism depends upon the claim that private ownership of the means of production is unnecessary for the successful operation of a market system. In the blueprint that I shall now sketch, I attempt to support this claim as concretely as possible. We have, as yet, very little empirical evidence that would enable us to evaluate this claim in a rigorous way. So the argument must be, at this point, theoretical.

The market socialism I envisage has these components: firm will be managed by managers whose intention it will be to maximize profits, at going prices. That is, the firm manager will try to hire labor and produce output of such variety and quality as will maximize the long-run profits of the firm. Firm managers will either be elected by workers or appointed by boards of directors, about whose composition I will speak presently. What is important, however, is that managers try to maximize profit. Labor will be hired on labor markets, and wages will be set by supply and

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demand in the market. Almost all private goods and services will be allocated on markets, and prices will be determined in these markets. The government will continue to provide public goods, financed by taxation of profits and wages. Certain private goods, such as health services, may also be provided gratis to the population—but this is nothing new, even for capitalist countries.

There are two socialist aspects to this economy. The first is that the government will have the power to intervene in the economy to direct the pattern and level of investment. One plank of the platform of a political party in such a society will be the direction that investment would take should the party be elected. The desired investment levels and pattern will not be implemented through a command system but by manipulating the interest rates at which different industrial sectors can borrow funds from state banks. Thus, if the government's intention is to decrease the production of automobiles, it will raise, above the market rate, the interest rate at which the state banks lend to automobile firms. People will thus exercise some collective control, through democratic politics, over the use of savings in society. In this sense there will be public control of the use of the economic surplus, a phrase with a socialist ring. I do not propose that people vote on the composition of investment because of that ring but because I believe we lack the markets that would be necessary for investment to be allocated in a socially desirable way. This is reflected in the extreme volatility of investment in large capitalist economies, which is responsible for the business cycle and therefore, in particular, the rise and fall of unemployment. (What I am saying is less true of small capitalist countries, where the demand for exports can lead the business cycle. But it is substantially the case that the demand for investment goods leads the business cycle in countries like the United States.)

The second socialist aspect of this economy is that the profits of firms will not go to a small fraction of society but will be divided, after taxes, more or less equally among all households, taking a form that Oskar Lange called the social dividend. Thus a citizen will receive income from three sources: wage income, which will vary depending upon the worker's skill and amount of time worked; interest forthcoming from savings, which will also vary across households; and a social dividend that will be, in principle, approximately equal across households. The social dividend will be a form of guaranteed income, or what some European writers have called a universal grant. I prefer not to call it a grant, because it is not a gift (which "grant" connotes). It is that part of the national income which is not distributed as wages or interest but which belongs to the people as owners of the means of production. Of course, a society such as the one I am describing might decide to distribute profits in some other way, such as in proportion to the value of labor that a person expends, but I would oppose that proposal.

What will taxes be used for in this society? All the usual things: public goods that a government provides, income transfers to those unable to work, subsidies to families that cannot earn enough to live decently, and so on. They will also be used to subsidize the government's intervention in the capital market. (If the government encourages the production of refrigerators that do not use chlorofluorocarbons by discounting the interest rate to firms that make them, this will give rise to a deficit in the state banks, which will be financed through taxation.)

Inequality will continue to exist in this society, due primarily to the differential wages that people will earn and also, to some extent, to their differential savings behavior. What will be equalized is that part of income due to corporate profits.

Why do I include as an integral part of this proposal the stipulation that firm managers maximize profits of the firm? Would it not be better to let workers manage the firms directly? My answer is that the firm belongs to everyone, and every household depends upon each firm as a source of part of its income via the social dividend. Workers, in any case, should not be able to appropriate the profits of

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the firm they work in: that would lead to gross inequalities among workers. We know, from economic theory, that profit maximization under the right conditions (which include a competitive environment for the firm) leads to an efficient allocation of resources—that is the main reason to use profit maximization as a tool. Now, profit maximization will lead to some antisocial behavior, and that will have to be regulated. But we have no example of a large economy that has operated successfully without profit maximization as a goal of firms, and my attempt here is to propose a blueprint that is based, as much as possible, on the successes of capitalism but which deviates from capitalism in certain important ways.

These are the main lines of the blueprint. I shall modify it and fill it in a bit in what follows. If people continue to work about as hard as they do under capitalism, and technological change takes place about as it does under capitalism, then the two major differences between this kind of market socialism and capitalism are the direction of investment by a political process and a more egalitarian income distribution. Funds used under capitalism to finance the consumption of capitalists will here be distributed to all citizens. If capitalists consume a small fraction of national income, as in Norway, then the change in income distribution effected by market socialism would be small. If, as in Brazil, the rich consume 40 percent to 60 percent of national income, then the redistributive effect would be substantial.

Making the System Work

Will this system work? There are various levels at which the questions can be asked. One is at the level of economic theory. Is it possible for a market system to equilibrate an economy in which profits are distributed as I have described and in which the government intervenes in the investment behavior of the economy by manipulating interest rates if the managers of firms maximize profits, facing market prices, wages, and interest rates? My colleagues Joaquim Silvestre, Ignacio Ortuño, and I have studied this question, and the answer is yes.[1] It is possible for the government to achieve any of a large variety of possible compositions of investment for the economy by the setting of discounts and surcharges on the market interest rate, and prices in all markets will then adjust in such a way that an equilibrium is achieved, in which the demand for each good by consumers is equal to the supply of that good by firms. The social control over investment is achieved without setting ten thousand prices, or one million prices—the figure for the Soviet Union varies, depending upon the source. Nor does the center tell any firm what to produce, or tell firms where to find their inputs and where to ship their outputs. All these millions of decisions, supposedly but impossibly made by the planning system in Soviet-type economies, are left to individuals to arrange through markets. Yet by the adjustment of between five and twenty interest-rate discounts, the economy would realize the composition of investment that its planners aim to achieve.

Thus, I do not think that the lessons of the communist experience include an admonition against planning as such, against the direction of the economy toward certain ends. The methods of Soviet planning were ineffective and worse because they did not use markets as a way of decentralizing millions of small decisions. Actually, the most effective planning requires the use of markets. What is *not* planned in this vision of market socialism is the composition of output, the prices of goods, or the distribution of labor: just the composition of investment.

Another level at which the can-it-work question may be asked is: will the managers of firms be *motivated* to maximize profits in an economy where firms are not privately owned by investors? Will entrepreneurial spirit be forthcoming? Will technological innovation take place? This is the level on which most economists are skeptical concerning the feasibility of market socialism.

Let us first take up the question of managerial discipline. Stories abound about corrupt and incompetent management of firms in "socialist" economies: there was the famous *Krokodil*

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cartoon of the manager of a Soviet nail factory who, to meet a quota of one ton of nails, produces a one-ton nail. It is wrong to conclude from the experience of firms in a command economy what publicly owned firms would be like in a market economy. Managerial culture in the Soviet Union is demoralized, to say the least: mostly, one can only get the inputs one needs by bribery and barter. This culture would be very different if inputs and outputs could be bought and sold on markets. But this, of course, cannot be the complete answer to the query. "Bourgeois" finance economics maintains that the only reason that managers pursue the interests of shareholders, which require maximizing profits, rather than their own selfish interests, is the threat of losing their jobs. The discipline is provided via the stock market. If a firm is being poorly managed, its profit prospects will darken and its stock price will fall. It will become an attractive target for a takeover by investors who will buy the firm cheaply, put in better management, and return the firm to a profit-maximizing program. The stock market has therefore been called the market for corporate control. It is noteworthy that finance economists believe that private ownership of firms is insufficient to guarantee profit maximization. There must be *highly concentrated* private ownership, they maintain, with a few very large stockholders in whose interests it is to monitor the management closely. It is also large investors who organize takeovers. If this is so, the quandary for market socialism is real: how can an economy whose firms distribute profits diffusely devise a mechanism to monitor firm management?

A clue to a possible answer comes from the experience of Japanese capitalism, where the stock market was relatively unimportant in the economy until recently. Firms are organized into groups, called *keiretsu*. Each *keiretsu* is associated with a main bank, whose responsibility it is to lend to the firms in its group and to monitor the firms' managements. The investment projects proposed by firms are evaluated by the staff of the bank, and in this way the bank is able to monitor the firms' behavior. These main banks also defend firms in their group against takeovers from firms outside the group. This system has been successful, if we take Japanese capitalism to be a successful capitalist variant. But there is no market for corporate control in Japan—at least, it does not take the form that it has in the United States, and capital is not directed to its most profitable uses by the stock market. This last point is worth emphasizing, for another plank of capitalist ideology is that bureaucrats cannot decide how to allocate capital: that is best done by a stock market, where millions of people express their opinions by voting with their dollars. Yet in Japan, apparently, the accountants, economists, and industrial experts working for the big banks are sufficiently savvy to pass good judgment on investment proposals of firms.

Pranab Bardhan, an economist at the University of California, Berkeley, has proposed a system wherein firms in the kind of market socialist economy I outlined above could be organized into groups modeled after the Japanese *keiretsu*.[2] Say firms W, X, Y, and Z are in one group, with bank B. Each firm would own some shares of the other firms in the group, and the bank would also own some shares of each firm. The board of directors of a firm would consist of representatives of its shareholders, that is, of the various firms and banks in the group. That part of profits of firm W, say, not going to the bank, to the other three firms, or directly to W's own workers would go to the state and would be distributed to all citizens as part of the social dividend. The fraction of firm W's profits going to firms X, Y, and Z by virtue of their ownership of shares of W would constitute a significant other part of the social dividend of the workers of X, Y, and Z. Thus every worker in the economy would receive his or her social dividend from two sources: a centralized dividend from the government, made up of a small share of profits of all firms in the economy, and a decentralized part, consisting of a fraction of the profits of the other firms in his or her group. The function of this decentralization is to give firms X, Y, and Z an interest in monitoring the behavior of firm W. In particular, if firm X thinks firm W is not profit-maximizing, then it can ask the bank B

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to buy X's shares of W. This in turn puts pressure on the bank to force W to do better.

Bardhan's proposal is not equivalent to introducing a stock market; it is a mechanism for decentralizing the accountability of firm management to a small number of institutions, in this case other firms and banks, which are capable of monitoring the management. Complete equality in the social dividend received by different households would be compromised in the interests of creating a mechanism for decentralizing the monitoring of firms.

A word about innovation. Again, it would be wrong to conclude from the experience of firms in command economies that firms that are not privately owned will not innovate. I believe that, if there is sufficient competition innovation will occur in these market socialist firms. To the extent that innovation takes place in organized research and development divisions in large firms anywhere, it can just as well take place in a socialist firm.

It might be said that the kind of innovation that will not occur under market socialism will be that of the lonely inventor who, spurred on by the prospect of becoming a multimillionaire, invents a new kind of computer. Under capitalism, these people exist: if they succeed, they form small firms and are in almost all cases eventually bought out by large firms. I suggest that such private firms be permitted in market socialist economies. They should be nationalized, with proper compensation to the owners, at some given size. The government, instead of IBM, would buy out the small computer firm. Or the publicly owned IBM could buy out the small firm, subject to the usual antitrust considerations, which will be necessary under market socialism as well. This mechanism should provide almost as much incentive to the entrepreneurial spirit as capitalism provides.

To sum up, I think it is possible to use markets to allocate resources in an economy where firms are not privately owned by investors who trade stock in them with the purpose of maximizing their gain and that the government can intervene in such an economy to influence the level and composition of investment should the people wish to do so. The income distribution will be more equitable than in capitalist countries today.

Can Justice Exist with Market Socialism?

Will a market socialist society be a just society? Will it maximize the potential for self-realization of its citizens? It is wrong, in my view, to maintain that any market system, with or without capitalists, allocates resources and incomes justly. What perfectly working competitive markets do is pay people according to the evaluation that other people in society put on their "contribution." In a capitalist economy, a person's contribution consists not just of a labor contribution but also of his or her contribution of capital. Leftists have usually attacked the justice of capitalist income distribution on the grounds that capitalists are not the rightful owners of their capital and hence their receipt of profits is an injustice, which, moreover, constitutes exploitation of those to whom the capital should rightly belong. The problem with this argument is that it does not go far enough. For I do not think it is correct to say that a distribution of income in which each is paid the value of his or her labor contribution to the rest of society is just either. For it is surely the case that different people make contributions of very different values to society, owing in large part to their differential training and abilities. (It is wrong to say, as leftists sometimes do, that the contribution of an unskilled worker is just as valuable to society as that of a physician: it could be if, counterfactually, almost no one had the capacity to be an unskilled worker and almost everybody with no training could be a physician. Value must be measured not, as Marx said, just as the labor embodied in producing the thing but in the total real resource cost that people are willing to sacrifice to make the thing available.)

Under market socialism people will receive differential wages, and that will reflect their differential economic value to society. But they will neither *deserve* those wages nor be entitled to them, because I do not believe they deserve or are entitled to returns on their arbitrarily assigned genetic compositions and family and

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social environments, which largely determine their skills. This is an old Marxist point—in the introduction to the *Critique of the Gotha Program,* Marx wrote of payment according to the value of one's labor as a "bourgeois right."

I view the differential wages that will accompany a market socialist system as justifiable for only one reason: they are a by-product of using a labor market to allocate labor, and there is no known way to allocate labor more efficiently in a large, complex economy than by use of a labor market. Now there are various ways of decreasing real income differentials of workers that could be used by a market socialist society—to the extent, of course, that a democratically controlled society condones using them. One practice of the social democracies is to tax income sharply and progressively and to redistribute it by providing some goods, such as health services, on an equal basis to all at no fee.

The job of a socialist economist is to design an economic mechanism that would provide each person with sufficient material income to pursue his or her self-realization consistent with an equal degree of opportunity for self-realization provided for others. That's pretty vague, and this is not the place to try and sharpen it up, but the quick statement is that equality of income is a goal, subject to various caveats. So much attention is paid to the *efficient* allocation of resources because, given the present level of technological development and needs of people on the globe, one cannot afford to waste a lot in the process of production and distribution, and because the achievement of efficiency requires some inequality, as, for instance, in the wage differentials of a labor market and in the differential social dividends that would come about in Bardhan's firm-monitoring scheme.

If some inequality is one undesirable feature of market socialism, a second is, as G.A. Cohen has written, that the market "motivates contribution not on the basis of commitment to one's fellow human beings and a desire to serve them while being served by them, but on the basis of impersonal cash reward." Indeed, one should not idealize the behavior of people in a market socialist economy. Firms may advertise deceptively and try, as they do under capitalism, to create in people tastes for goods by exploiting their feelings of insecurity and incompetence. Workers will need unions to protect them from overzealous managers even if they have the power to remove management. More generally, conflicts between different groups of people based upon their different economic interests will continue to exist. Environmentalists and workers in the lumber industry may continue to clash.

Why Have Market Socialism?

What are the attractive features of market socialism? I have stressed, thus far, income distribution. Profits, that part of the social product that remains after paying wages, interest, and taxes, are to be distributed on a more or less equal basis to citizens. I have also mentioned the planning of investment—but this is neither a necessary part of the blueprint nor something that capitalist countries cannot in principle do, and so it would be wrong to stress it here. What I have not yet discussed is politics, which I believe would be more democratic than in capitalist democracies because a class of capitalists who have the economic power enabling them to affect and to a great extent control state policy, both through the electoral process and by other means, would not exist.

One fears, of course, that managers of public firms and banks would become a class, *in loco capitalisti,* and exert political power to maintain their growing empires. I have, thus far, not mentioned an important role for workers' control of firms—a control of which I am somewhat leery as it may impede profit maximization and its concomitant efficiency. But perhaps that danger is small compared to the danger of the growth of a managerial class in itself, and workers' control over the choice of management might be the best form of insurance against the latter.

Suppose that through workers' control of management, or some other kind of checks, no politically powerful managerial class develops. What kind of politics could we expect to see?

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There will continue to be bourgeois parties—if this society guarantees the kind of civil liberties that the left is committed to, then surely ideological conservatives will organize, not to speak of those who may have historical claims to big chunks of now nationalized wealth. Thus debate will surely continue on all the big issues—war and foreign policy, the level of government transfer payments and public spending, the environment, equality of opportunity, racism, sexism, and so on. I think that the property relations in a system of market socialism will be the basis for a gradual shift to the left in mass politics, and for this reason: there will not be individuals who stand to gain so much from right-wing politics as there are in a capitalist system. Surely the income of citizens will depend upon the profitability of firms—perhaps the social dividend will make up 20 percent of the income of a typical household. There would, however, be no class of citizens with great resources at their command whose incomes would depend *so much* on the profits of firms as the incomes of capitalists do. Consequently, citizens in such a society would be less willing than capitalists to trade off peace, the environment, the welfare of the underprivileged, and so on, for increased corporate profits.

Finally, consider the issue of education. I have stated that socialism does not advocate equality of income as a right. I believe the fundamental goal is equality of opportunity for self-realization, and in a historical era of material scarcity, where for most people more material goods will increase their opportunities for self-realization, equality of income is therefore a corollary goal, though not a postulate. Just as important, perhaps more so, is education; a socialist society must devote resources to rectifying through education, as much as possible, the inequalities of opportunity that children will otherwise face due to their different backgrounds and talents. Will a market socialist society be willing to devote the necessary resources to education? There can be no guarantee that any democratic society will do so, for such a reallocation of resources requires convincing the middle class to subsidize working-class education to a greater degree than it does now. Of course, the education of middle-class children should be improved as well. But if the goal is equalization of opportunity among children, then the greater increase in educational expenditures must be to improve the verbal and mathematical literacy of working-class children, and especially, among these, of minority children. What can be said, I think, is that the influence of the capitalist class on educational policy will be absent, and it will be up to the population at large to decide what fraction of society's resources it is willing to commit to education. Under these circumstances, I believe there would be a gradual increase in the fraction of resources so devoted, although this is surely not a foregone conclusion.

The Bolshevik revolution was, in the beginning, a utopian experiment: its designers inherited from Marx an antipathy toward the market mechanism and believed that they could replace it with a system of central allocation. That was not their most devastating error, but it was bad enough. Worse was the strangulation of all opposition, which made almost impossible the rectification of errors in general. There were advocates of market socialism, in some aspects, throughout Soviet history, from Nikolai Bukharin in the twenties to Leonid Kantorovich (the only Soviet recipient of a Nobel prize in economics) and Evsey Liberman in the sixties and seventies. But by that time, the ideological blinders of the labor theory of value and the physical entrenchment of a class of state and party authorities who derived their power largely from the absence of markets combined to render almost nil the prospects for a transition to market socialism, or, as many would say, to socialism.

What the left must learn from the last seventy-five years is not that socialism is impossible, nor even that planning is unnecessary or harmful, but rather that the transition to socialism will be less dramatic than we had hoped. What some will consider bad news is that socialism, at least for a long time, will require markets. The good news is that markets do not require capitalists, that is, the concentration of economic power and wealth in the hands of a small class. The bad news is that an

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economic structure based upon markets will make the transition to "the socialist person" a more protracted process than we had hoped. The good news is that without a capitalist class and in a democratic setting, people will be able to think more objectively about, and act in their true interests, than under bourgeois democracy. Marx was a great teacher on the nature of capitalism; he was not competent to instruct us on how to construct socialism, a lesson we must learn from the history, both capitalist and socialist, of the twentieth century. □

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Joanne Barkan and David Belkin Comment

Fashioning models for a successful socialist economy is an idiosyncratic inclination these days, but one that we share with John Roemer. He's not willing to concede that the socialist project has been buried irretrievably beneath the wreckage of communism, and neither are we. Working carefully and with an open mind, Roemer has pushed the debate on market socialism forward a good measure. But as we pore over his blueprint, imagining how it would function in three dimensions, it looks seriously flawed.

Roemer begins with some traditional noncapitalist assumptions: state control over the "commanding heights" of the economy, public ownership of enterprises, democratic disposition of society's economic surplus, and income equality. He sets out to show that markets function no less effectively when enterprises are publicly, rather than privately owned, and that his version of socialism will be as efficient as capitalism. Feature by feature, here's what we found.

Government Control Over Investment

Roemer's socialist government will arrange the pattern and levels of investment throughout the economy by setting a specific interest rate for each sector's borrowing. Wielding this instrument, the government will control the famous "commanding heights."

But how can one partition a complex economy into neat sectors with unambiguous boundaries? Lines based on product groups often cut through firms rather than between them. Most firms, small and large, no longer produce in narrow product niches. Where would General Electric go? Or Dupont? Or Sony?

As soon as the government attempts to carve up the national product, the lobbying hordes will swoop down, clamoring for their firms or industries to be redefined into a lower interest-rate sector. The system's susceptibility to logrolling and influence peddling will be immense. Firms with good friends in high places—or mass followings below—will wrangle more favorable terms. Not only will these deviations throw off the government's investment plan; they will insinuate soft budget constraints throughout the economy, sabotaging efficiency. (When a firm need not cover costs with earned income because it receives a subsidy of some kind, that firm operates under a soft budget constraint.)

Meanwhile, the government must find a way to make its interest-rate differentials stick. If capital can flow freely from one sector to another, it will naturally seek the highest return. It may well flow in directions not desired by the government, once again foiling the grand plan. So the government will put constraints on the movement of capital—which immediately creates another level of bureaucratic management where lobbyists can congregate. The more successful the lobbying, the less effective the government's plan; but the tighter the controls on capital, the less dynamic the economy.

Roemer argues that this system is both democratic and socialist because citizens, as owners of the means of production, elect their government on the basis of party platforms, each of which includes an

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investment proposal. So 50 percent plus one of the voters will determine a pattern of interest rates by selecting the one that seems to benefit them most. This may be formally democratic, but is it economically rational? And suppose economic conditions shift dramatically between elections. Are the parties in power locked into a plan that is more detailed than the usual economic program and therefore more inflexible?

If this interest-rate scheme looks so problematic, one wonders how the Japanese pulled off *their* triumph in sectoral planning, which also involved interest-rate manipulation. The answer is that the Japanese version dispensed with democracy. The system is corporatist: a powerful old-boys' network—bankers, industrialists, politicos—called the shots. With vast resources at hand and the likelihood of even greater profits to come, they coordinated long-range plans without the intrusion of democratic procedure.

Furthermore, Japanese industrial policy has always been much less ambitious than what Roemer proposes. A few firms were chosen as industry leaders in several key sectors and favored accordingly. Low-cost capital was provided for research and development, but the state never took on the role of exclusive supplier of credit. Firms often ignored the preferences of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry; they obtained their own financing on their own terms based on their own reading of investment opportunities.

Public Ownership of the Means of Production

Roemer lays out an economy made up of publicly owned enterprises whose profits after taxes are dispersed to all citizens in the form of a social dividend. He then anticipates the standard and stickiest objection: such enterprises won't operate efficiently even if their managers swear on pain of dismissal to maximize profits. (It's generally agreed that efficiency goes hand in hand with profit maximization.) Economists have discovered—Roemer explains—that even private ownership can't guarantee efficiency unless a few principle owners have a stake in monitoring management.

So Roemer introduces a version of the Japanese *keiretsu* system. State banks would each oversee several clusters of enterprises, deciding on loans and monitoring management. The banks would control shares in each firm, and each firm would in turn control shares in the other firms of the same cluster. After taxes, a portion of a firm's profits would go to its workers and to all its shareholders (the latter also make up the board of directors); the remaining profits would go into the social dividend.

We see several difficulties here. Unable to reconcile profit maximization with public ownership of the means of production and citizen appropriation of economic surplus, Roemer drops some of the socialist features he used to justify his model. First, he actually reintroduces a form of principle ownership with his bank-and-firm clusters, creating a quasi-privatized system.

Second, his clusters would inevitably produce substantial variations in wealth and economic power, with some clusters churning out record profits and others barely hanging on. Since Roemer designated income equality as a socialist feature, his model loses another distinguishing characteristic. Gross inequalities would beget the same cruelties in Roemer's society that they do under capitalism. Of course, the government could smooth out sharp differences with progressive taxation—a fine and just solution, but one that's available under capitalism and thus doesn't enhance the socialist nature of Roemer's model.

Third, in order to have principle owners who will monitor efficiency, Roemer must pare down the social dividend—that socialist feature that distributes economic surplus equally among citizens. Instead, a firm's surplus goes first to its workers and shareholders. Roemer doesn't speculate on how much would be left for the social dividend, but it might not be more than any government could collect with progressive taxes.

Fourth, we wonder if worker-shareholders will really be motivated to monitor management closely. Monitor duty resulting in stronger cluster-firm profits might yield the individual worker no more than a few hundred dollars a year. Workers might find more lucrative (or enjoyable) uses for their time. If workers aren't inclined to oversee management, efficiency throughout the economy will suffer in the long run, and the very rationale for the cluster system falls apart.

When it comes to encouraging risk taking, the cluster system might fail again. By the time profits trickle down to the single worker-shareholder, the potential gain from a gamble might not be hefty enough to induce adventurous investment. Since economists agree that dynamism depends on some high-risk, high-return innovation, a cluster economy could bog down.

Finally, the problem of capital mobility, which cropped up in the interest-rate scheme, surfaces again. Will capital be able to move from a lackluster cluster to a vibrant one? If not, the economy will

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sink into inefficiency. But if capital is allowed to move freely, the ties between a bank and its firms will be loosened, once again undermining the rationale for the cluster system.

Workers' Control Over Management

Roemer recognizes a dangerous flaw in his socialist model—the likely evolution of a cryptocapitalist class made up of bankers and managers in the most powerful firms. Sitting atop financial empires, their economic strength would easily slip into political influence. To keep these managers in check, Roemer decides to give the workers of each firm the power to elect and dismiss their bosses. It's not clear whether the new arrangement—workers' control—would be sufficient to counter the power of a managerial class. Roemer simply states that workers' control or some other mechanism might work—which hardly seems an adequate investigation of a serious problem.

Roemer brushes past another difficulty when he mentions being leery of workers' control because it could undermine efficiency. He says no more, but it's worth speculating on what many economists agree could be the results of basing an *entire* economy on workers' control. Worker-shareholders might consistently resist taking on new employees because a larger payroll would shrink profits per worker in the short run. This tendency, rippling throughout an economy, would inhibit labor mobility—and, ultimately, efficiency. Workers might shy away from labor-saving technology in order to preserve their jobs. This, too, would impede efficiency. And workers might prefer taking profits home rather than reinvesting. Over time, innovation as well as efficiency would founder.

Private Ownership

According to his own standards, Roemer dilutes the socialist nature of his model still further by permitting—reluctantly—private ownership of small firms. He does this to ensure that inventor-entrepreneurs will still play their role as innovators in the economy. When private firms reach a certain size, the government will nationalize them with fair compensation.

Roemer is correct to worry about innovation, but his solution could be a nightmare. Let's say the government takes over firms with more than one hundred employees. Every brisk business with 102 employees would probably badger (or pay off) the bureaucracy for dispensation, monkey around with payroll records, or regularly fire a few hapless workers. And who would make sure that no private business went over the limit? One would need an army of size-investigators to knock on doors all over the country and count heads.

The threat of nationalization would probably ward off foreign investors—as would restrictions on the free flow of capital needed to maintain the cluster system and interest-rate differentials. (Roemer doesn't discuss integration into the international market, but his economy could have big trouble here.) Most problematic of all, inevitable nationalization would discourage entrepreneurs from making long-range plans. They'd be more inclined to take their profits and get out, undercutting innovation in the long run.

Politics in the Absence of a Capitalist Class

Roemer sees politics shifting left once there is no domineering capitalist class to subordinate the general good to profit making. Unlike capitalists, citizens in his society will think more objectively about their true interests. They'll be more inclined to spend for social benefits like education; they'll be less inclined to sacrifice the environment.

This sounds like wishful thinking—especially since Roemer hasn't demonstrated that his system won't spawn its own domineering elite. But let's suppose that the big bankers and managers are somehow reigned in. Every working person in society now has her or his income directly tied—through the social dividend—to annual profit reports. Roemer speculates that this won't have much effect on political thinking because only a small portion of their income will come from enterprise profits.

We've argued that this small portion might not be enough to encourage workers to monitor management or to jump into risky investments, but it's probably quite enough to shape political behavior. This is because politics in Roemer's system has such a direct and predictable impact on income. The processes that spew out interest-rate differentials, for example, influence the size and distribution not only of the social dividend but of wages as well. How can worker-shareholders not take the deepest personal—that is, factional—interest in these politics?

The serious flaw in Roemer's thinking here is wishing into existence the New Socialist Man and Woman. Rid of the capitalists, suddenly they reveal themselves to be clearheaded, farsighted, and consistently generous.

John Roemer grapples seriously with key issues—democracy, equality, efficiency, innovation—thereby leading anyone interested in market socialism to consider its possible economic mechanisms more closely. But something is wrong. Perhaps

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because Roemer begins with assumptions that are too global (all enterprises will be publicly owned; the government will direct all investment). Other assumptions implement ideology too rigidly (the people, as owners of the means of production, will democratically select the government's investment plan; all profits will be distributed to the people as owners of the means of production). After setting out these initial propositions, Roemer senses that the boat won't float. So he introduces new devices—again universally applied—such as the cluster system and workers' control. He ends up with an economy potentially mired in bureaucracy and hamstrung by rigid structures. And along the way, the socialist content has been greatly diluted.

What might work better? An economy that begins as a mix of public, private, and worker-controlled enterprises, including banks? Indicative planning for a variable number of sectors? Regulated markets? High quality, universal public services that decommodify human needs by taking them completely out of the market? Not socialist enough! comes the cry. But suppose such a model ends up producing greater socialist substance. . . . Well, whatever the model, it will have to tackle the problems raised here. The debate, we hope, will continue. □

John Roemer Replies

I will respond to the Barkan and Belkin points seriatim. *On government control of investment*: There have been, and are, selective credit controls in many capitalist countries, and the "lobbying hordes" that Barkan and Belkin fear have not swept down to sabotage the system. Indeed, the states of the East Asian tigers (particularly, South Korea) have influenced investment through access to credit from state banks. Granted, any system of selective credit controls will induce some rent-seeking activity; but these costs have to be weighed against the substantial benefits of investment planning in the absence of a full set of futures and insurance markets.

Will capital "seek the highest return"? Of course! The point of interest-rate differentials is to make otherwise unprofitable sectors attractive for investment, should society decide that growth of such sectors is socially desirable.

Barkan and Belkin have in mind a rigid and unrealistic conception of democratic politics if they believe that a democratically elected government cannot change its plan should economic conditions so warrant. All actual democratic governments do this, and there is no reason that a market socialist government could not do so as well. It is up to the electorate to decide, at the next election, whether the government responded to changes in the economic environment in a good or bad way.

I am surprised that my critics seem to believe that democracy is incompatible with the implementation of selective credit controls (their comments on Japan). In democratic France, seven of the top ten banks are state owned and are influential in channeling investment. In Germany, the state bank is also important. Of course, Barkan and Belkin might respond that France and Germany are not *really* democratic, because economic policy is heavily influenced by a capitalist class. But then their argument really is that a democracy where people have approximately equal economic power cannot successfully (or efficiently) adjudicate conflicts of interest. This is, of course, a much larger topic than the present comment can discuss, but it may be worth noting the rather nihilistic vision of democracy that their criticism implies.

Finally, I should say that Barkan and Belkin perhaps take my blueprint too literally. It would not be necessary for the government to announce investment subsidies or surcharges for every sector in the economy—perhaps only for a few central ones. And it is not necessarily industrial *sectors* that would be subsidized, but perhaps underdeveloped *areas* of the country. The principal point of my discussion of investment planning is that it is possible for the government to redress the market failures involving investment without direct administrative allocation of investment goods, a system that would be plagued with the inefficiencies that were characteristic of Soviet-type economies. One of the errors of the postmortems of communism has been the identification of central planning with command/administrative allocation systems. These terms are not co-extensive; it is only the latter that have been shown not to function.

Public ownership of the means of production. Perhaps my definition of the social dividend was not sufficiently clear. It is that part of the national income that is left over after wages and interest are

The author wishes to thank Pranab Bardhan for his important contribution to this comment.

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paid; it takes the form of profits of firms. Central to my view of market socialism is the claim that a market economy has a great deal of latitude in how to distribute this part of national income—much more latitude, in fact, than it has in the distribution of wages and interest. (It is this claim that is challenged by Hayekian economics, which maintains that profits must be allocated to those entrepreneurs who "create" them, lest profit-creating activities not be brought forth.) In "Blueprint," the share of profits received by a citizen comes from two sources: first, a share of the profits of all firms in the economy, which he or she receives in the form of public services paid for by taxes on firm profits, and second, a direct distribution of a share of profits from the firms in the *keiretsu* in which the citizen is employed. The first part will be more or less equal across citizens (or, in some cases, will be distributed in accordance with need, as in health or education services), while the second part may vary somewhat across citizens, because of the differential profitability of the different industrial groups. This variability, however, will not be extreme, for the government can tax more profitable firms progressively. There must, however, remain some inequality in the second part as an incentive to profit maximization and innovation.

What Barkan and Belkin ignore in their discussion is the important role of bank monitoring: firms are monitored by their boards of directors, which consist of representatives of other firms, other institutional investors (insurance companies, pension funds), and the main bank associated with the industrial group. Bank monitoring of firms has been shown to be a successful alternative to the stock market in Japan and Germany. Of course, the German and Japanese banks are in the main privately owned, and so a legitimate question is: will publicly owned banks monitor firms as well as private banks evidently can?

I believe that, with sufficient legal and institutional safeguards, the answer is yes. Why will banks not soften the budget constraint of failing firms in their group? The key is that these public banks will be in competition to represent, or to induct into their industrial groups, successful firms (including new firms). Thus, a bank wants to build a reputation as a sound financial manager, one that maintains profitability in its group. This will involve efforts to rescue firms that should be rescued but not to prop up firms that should die. It is also important to have legislation insulating banks from government interference in their short- and medium-run activities. Finally, the state must commit itself to a relatively free trade policy (with the exception of infant industry protection). Its firms must be exposed to the brisk winds of international competition, which will weed out the ones that should not survive.*

I see no reason to shy away from the participation of foreign capital in the national economy. The mandate of market socialism is to equalize incomes in the national economy. If the size of the domestic pie can be increased by the participation of foreign capital, so be it. This is "market socialism in one country"; it is not realistic, at this time, to try to plan for an equal distribution of the international pie, desirable though that may be. Again, legal safeguards must prevent international capital from playing an important political role in the country. This may be easier said than done; as in my earlier discussion of rent-seeking, there is a trade-off, and the government must optimize.

Worker management. The jury is still out on workers' control over management. Probably the most prudent proposal is for the firm's board of directors and its workers each to have some voice in the selection of management. Economic theory suggests that it may be possible to design the tax mechanism so that worker-controlled firms maximize profits (see the work of Jacques Dreze), but to date the successful examples involve only small parts of a national economy (there are only 18,000 workers involved in Mondragon). "Blueprint" is distinguished from other proposals of market socialism in the peripheral role played by worker-controlled firms. I would proceed cautiously and experimentally with this institutional form.

Private ownership. Barkan and Belkin are inventing when they say that I "reluctantly" allow the private ownership of small firms. That was nowhere implied in "Blueprint." The only question concerns private firms that begin as small ones and become large. I suggested that, first, most successful small firms would be naturally taken over by large public firms, as successful small firms are in capitalist economies. Whether to have mandatory nationalization of private firms that grow large and are not absorbed into the public sector is, again, an issue that will require experimentation. It may be desirable not to nationalize large-profit firms, for there is some evidence that public sector managers do a better job if the managerial labor market includes private firms. In France, where managers move freely between the private and public sectors, public firms are reputedly well run; in Belgium, where public

* It is interesting to note that Rudolf Meidner, the architect of the Swedish "solidaristic" wage policy, advocated high wages for unskilled workers not just for distributional reasons, but to weed out weak firms that could survive only by paying low wages.

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sector managers typically do not migrate to the private sector, they are, reputedly, not.**

But even if, for political reasons (that is, to prevent the emergence of a politically powerful capitalist class) the society decides to nationalize large private firms, it need not have the terrible incentive properties that Barkan and Belkin fear. The question is whether the state will pay full value to the private owners. It might be objected that if it does, what's the virtue of nationalizing the firm? After all, its erstwhile owners will walk away with the full value of the firm, if the state sticks to a policy of paying such in order to create good incentives in the private sector. The answer is that citizens with large private wealth in a market socialist society will not have the political power of citizens with large private wealth in a capitalist economy, for they will not be able to invest that wealth in a way that controls the means of production. While private participation in the "stock market" might not be prohibited, privately held shares would not be given a vote in corporate matters. Again, this practice has been typical in Japan, and has not ruined the capital market. T. Boone Pickens finally sold his 26 percent interest in Koito Manufacturing after his attempts to influence corporate policy were totally rebuffed. The management wouldn't even meet with him! (See *The Washington Post,* April 28, 1991.)

Politics. Barkan and Belkin are again inventing when they write that my discussion of politics presupposes a New Socialist Person. On the contrary, my intention was to argue that, without the existence of a class of citizens who derive vast incomes from control of the means of production, politics would change. That is, people who derive only a relatively small fraction of their income from profits generally (say 20 percent to 25 percent, which is approximately the share of profits in national income, and would therefore be the share of a citizen's social dividend in his or her income), and an extremely small fraction of their income from any one firm, will have different economic interests from people who derive all of their income from the profits of a single firm, and I rely on that to predict a difference between politics in market socialism and capitalism.

It may be useful to outline the economic argument in more detail. Imagine an economy that has, for simplicity, one large firm that employs all citizens, and produces the one good that they consume. The economy is capitalist: each receives some wage income from the firm, and some profit income, but the shares of profit income are highly unequal. Suppose, now, that the firm's profitability depends on the level of some "public bad," say, the level of pollution that the firm emits. (A public bad is a "bad" that everyone must consume; its existence affects all of society.) A person's welfare in this economy depends upon two things: the level of the private good that she or he consumes and the level of the public bad, which everyone consumes equally.* The trick is that profits increase with the level of the public bad, so that citizens have different interests concerning what the level of the public bad should be, depending upon the fraction of their income that derives from profits. It can be shown that, under reasonable economic conditions, the larger a citizen's share of profits in the firm, the larger the level of the public bad he or she will want. Thus, if the level of the public bad is decided upon by those who own the firm, it will be higher the more powerful the large shareholders in the firm. In particular, in a market-socialist economy, where each citizen receives an equal share of the firm's profits, no one will want the public bad to be produced at as high a level as "capitalists" want it to be.**

I believe this argument has quite widespread application. Besides pollution, consider the following examples: the speed of the assembly line, noxious advertising, investment of the firm in South Africa, and conducting war to lower the price of some imported input used by the firm. Each of these fulfills the requirements of the model described above—it is a public bad that directly reduces the welfare of most citizens (or workers), but increases the profits of the firm and, therefore, of citizens' incomes. The model implies that, were profits of firms equally distributed in a population, these "public bads" would be set at lower levels than they are in a capitalist society. This is not due to the good intention of New Socialist Persons but just to the fact that their *economic interests* differ from those of citizens who receive incomes from firm profits. A citizen who derives but a small fraction of her income from an oil refinery whose profits would soar were a war waged to keep the price of oil low may well find it worthwhile to suffer a fall in that component of her income in return for not going to

** I owe this point to Gerard Roland.

* Forget about the possibility that the rich can buy houses near the ocean, where pollution is minimal. That only makes my point stronger.

** For the details of this argument, see my as yet unpublished paper, "Would economic democracy decrease the amount of public bads?"

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war; but a citizen whose income may otherwise decline in the hundreds of millions of dollars may well decide to wage the war, despite the fact that he, too, dislikes war.

I suggest, therefore, that we would observe an improvement in the "quality of life" were society's profit income distributed in an egalitarian fashion, to the extent that that quality is synonymous with small levels of public bads that are associated with the profitability of firms. And this conclusion holds given people as they are now, not as they arguably would become after several generations of society without the constant barrage of propaganda meant to win the average citizen over to support the interests of capitalists.

"Blueprint" is purposefully conservative in its proposals. It seeks to redress one of capitalism's main evils—the inequality of the distribution of profit income—by making the smallest possible changes from relatively successful capitalist economies. None of its particular microeconomic features are new: markets, investment planning, bank monitoring of firms, and nonvoting corporate shares are all existing practices and institutions. Nor does it presuppose a new kind of altruistic citizen for its successful implementation. What is new—and I must emphasize that "Blueprint" is not my own creation but the amalgamation of the work of a number of economists to whom I have referred—is the claim that one can separate various characteristics of an economic mechanism that many have believed to be inseparable. To wit, planning is not the same thing as central allocation, and the equal distribution of profits does not entail highly diffuse, and therefore unsuccessful, monitoring of firms. It is not of great import to me whether the firms in "Blueprint" should be denominated as "publicly owned"; they share with the traditional public firm the characteristic that profits are distributed equally to (or finance services that are consumed equally by or according to need by) members of the population, but they differ from the traditional public firm in being controlled by entities that have direct economic interests, as opposed to political interests, in their performance. □

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Jeremy Larner

ALL YE KNOW ON EARTH AND ALL YE NEED TO KNOW

Two hot-selling, over-analyzed gossip books—Julia Phillips's *You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again* and Kitty Kelley's *Nancy Reagan: The Unauthorized Biography*—give pause to consider the peculiar symbiosis that exists between those who acquire power in our society and those who write about them, even critically.

The town in Julia Phillips's title is Hollywood. She was the first woman producer to share an Oscar for Best Picture (*The Sting*). Afterwards, she found herself thinking, "Is this all there is?"—but then she want on to produce *Taxi Driver* and *Close Encounters*, and now describes hitting a wall of frustration and self-loathing in her mid-forties. She found she still has "a pretty good brain and a very fast mouth." She continues to run around, eat lunch, make deals; she's getting over her drug problem, but she realizes she's been in a state of "free-floating anxiety, depression, and rage" for so long that her unhappiness is as comfortable as an old bathrobe. The succession of sex and love experiences in her life has left no man who matters, it's harder to get any movie done, let alone a good one, and she wonders whether any of it was fun in the first place.

She divulges lots of inside stuff on her celebrated friends and enemies, but the reader is soon searching in vain for some continuity. Maybe I'm prejudiced—the brittle, edgy, forever counterpunching tone reminded me of a hundred producers to whom a writer's script is merely a deal, open to renegotiation on every page. One learns in L.A. that there is no story, that is, no core happening or subject or style or process, that can't be altered in respect to its value in cash, power and prestige. The sum of these three qualities is, for those with the inner eye of Ms. Phillips, imprinted on everyone's forehead.

Through a hip diary intercut with flashbacks and pieces of memory that function like a montage, Phillips tries her stuff with stars, executives, directors, lovers, agents, friends, partners and family, never quite sure what is happening, except that after each failed encounter she remains hungry, dissatisfied and in terror of losing everything. Loss of power over others—metered, naturally, by fading sexual command—symbolizes for her the approach of death. As a writer, she wants to plug us into her frustration at the only game in town, where bitchy, random doings come down in a postmodern flow, as sharklike talents prowl in a fever to use, buy or screw one another.

Without changing expression, Phillips gets off good lines about Goldie Hawn's too-often dirty hair, or the unpredictable airs of Steven Spielberg, Redford, Newman, Tony Bill and a cast of thousands, most of whom could be interchanged from page to page. Not that Phillips herself is pushing a claim to superiority: the offense of her book and her manner may result from her implicit insistence that her superiors in power acknowledge her equality as they exploit her brains and friendship.

Who the hell is *she*?, the movie powers retort, just as the Washington press apparatus replies to Kitty Kelley. *Time* and *Newsweek* point out that Kelley thrives on her nerve, just like Nancy; likes to dress up and play queen bee, just like Nancy; and beneath her tough as nails exterior is super-sensitive, just like Nancy—but the implication is that she hasn't earned the right to be that way.

Phillips, for her part, is smart enough to sense that her real subject is the ghastly waste and pain and emptiness at the center of the fantasy industry. She offers herself as a victim, stuck like a speed freak on an endless comedown with all too indifferent companions. Her portrait of her environment explains why actors are so grandiose and vague in their political pronouncements—and why they can shift positions as easily as Frank Sinatra went from Kennedy to Reagan, or as Reagan went rightward himself, returning later only to abduct the image of FDR. This is why it's a pointless tease to ask the common question about who a public figure really is. Ask not who is your leader, ask what you can do for him. A friend or collaborator, let alone son or

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daughter, must stand in the wings while the star grins and waves in the spotlight—and can be replaced for the next show. Yet since only the spotlight validates one's reality, no one is more alone than the star, who has no ground on which he or she can stand with others and test the basis on which he or she fakes relations with them. But for magic moments the fake friendship can be better than real—which is why stars so often succeed in dictating to interviewers the terms in which they are to be seen, and are outraged when they find they've granted an audience to an ingrate who is not delighted to yield his own way of seeing.

To observe via Phillips's descriptions the massive hysteria of star-making and image-servicing, is to understand what would otherwise seem like improbably petty behavior. Why, for instance, are stars like Ronnie and Nancy so often cheap, ungenerous, grudging of charity or taxes and oblivious to the impropriety of bribes? Kelley shows their expectation that the role of the world is to provide for them, and that not to get what's coming to you is a sign one is downward bound.

The Phillips book helps put the Kelley book in context. What stands out when all dubious innuendo is removed from Kelley is the account of a husband and wife team moving from show business to super-show business. Ronnie and Nancy are from a generation which would be embarrassed to flaunt drugs or sex and use them for image-creation. What they want is a display of traditional prizes: social connections, public applause, and riches. Still, the imperatives by which Ronnie and Nancy operate all come from the movieland power structure which dismays and rebuffs Julia Phillips.

Why did the public so easily accept Ronnie's switch from movies to television, from the earnest "best friend" role to tough but decent number one American guy? I'm reminded of an incident on the set of *The Candidate*, when we filmed the speech I wrote in which would-be senator Bill McKay loses self and soul to his own rhetoric and the sudden response of the crowd. The speech was so deliberately empty that director Michael Ritchie feared that the assortment of volunteer extras who made up McKay's audience wouldn't know how to respond. He got me to stand up and explain each line in advance, tell just where to laugh or applaud as McKay called for "a test of our courage, our compassion, our faith in ourselves and in our country. . . . All I can say is, I'm willing to give it all I've got. Let's make a beginning!"

My coaching proved unnecessary. When Robert Redford delivered the words, our hitherto bored crowd roared its approval. Many wept, even out of camera-range. Redford—unlike Ronnie—had the grace to be scared. We were tapping a power beyond the reach of political decency or social content. Unwittingly, we had invited the audience to identify with its own applause, to empower even the mere depiction of power, even the satire of power, as they gave in to a yearning for submission deeper than anything we had imagined.

The same scenario replayed itself in 1988, when interviews with Dan Quayle's friends revealed that young Danforth had been inspired by his first viewing of *The Candidate* and returned many times to study how to model himself after Bill McKay. Quayle missed the point, thought he saw a how-to film where we made a watch-out one. But, like McKay, he won.

Kitty Kelley is another such winner, writing a book about a grander winner. Her voluminous list of sources (many of whom refused to speak to her) do not conceal her selectively venomous technique—with which she spins fact, hearsay and malice into a portrait of our self-created First Lady as Messalina. The press has been quick to point out Kelley's errors and exaggerations—most glaringly that Nancy apparently never slept with the dubiously connected Sinatra. She merely worshipped him.

Yes, Nancy ignored, chastened and antagonized the Reagan children, but they remain mostly loyal. Patti Davis, in fact, is credited by a reliable reporter familiar with both L.A. and Washington, of provoking her mother to prod her "Evil Empire" father to seek detente with the cunning proto-capitalist in the Kremlin. But never mind. It was a logical move consistent with the right-wing doctrine of peace through strength. Still, Nancy pushed Ronnie to go down in history as a peacemaker—when the stars were right.

Of course there were larger forces in play. Ronnie, in his fifth act, rose to the occasion with the flexibility of a veteran actor—as he did when Nancy pushed him out on the White House trail in 1976. He would have been content to return to his TV job, delivering corporate tablets of the law, pocketing big appearance fees, and basking in the applause of weapon-owning, abortion-hating white macho rule-of-the-stronger America. The truth that emerges from Kelley's funhouse picture finally amounts to a tribute to Nancy, for she inflates Nancy's power and influence at the expense not only of Ron himself but of every other force that affected his presidency.

Generally, the news media reacted reasonably to Kelley's book, correcting her and placing her in the tradition of other dirt-digging scandal-mongers. It's

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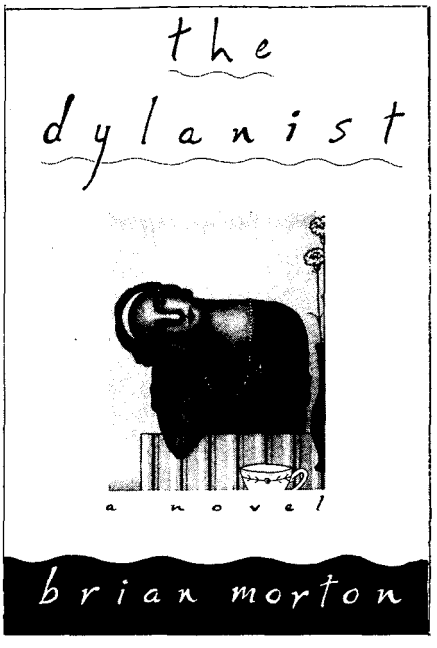
not surprising that Nancy's guardian angels—led by the fulsome Lord Buckley and the self-inflating George Will—hit Kelley with scathing contempt. Yet the bulk of the coverage conceded that, despite her sleazy distortions and libels, Kitty caught the essence of Nancy's personality. While posing herself as gracious and aristocratic, Mrs. R. was driven by a passion for control, revenge, and display. *Newsweek* even concluded that "Ronald Reagan and his wife had to be among the most hypocritical people ever to live in the White House."

Strong words. But still, the point is missed. By sensationalizing the already sensational—the alleged affairs, abortions, cheapness, cheating and selfishness—the media did for Kelley what Phillips and other film marketers try to do for silly movies—to certify that their bloated overstatements are the central issues of our time. In this game, the newspapers and television have a peculiar partnership with the most flatulent culture products—which goes into effect when the media sense the public is going to fall for something, or into it, and jumps on the bandwagon in time to score with a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In this way, the media are more like Kelley than different from her. All agree that celebrity news must be taken most seriously, and with each personal revelation or—heaven help us!—world-significant decision, the measure of public opinion must be solemnly taken and analyzed. Thus we have the *New York Times* scolding itself, in its in-house journal, for portraying a speaking tour by Bush as a set of stunts designed for TV. The *Times*, announces the *Times*, does not attribute motives. Then how does it, how could it, cover politics at all?

In this respect, Kitty Kelley is better than most of her critics. In brisk, serviceable prose, she connects the Reagans' attribution of personal superiority or destiny to those who collect great wealth, to Ron's policy of indifference to the poor—or worse, his serving as an accomplice to an eight-year run of public looting. The HUD scandal would have been a mind-blowing case of government intervention in behalf of affluent criminality, except that its scope pales in comparison with Wall Street scams and with the transfer of S&L assets to private pockets. Not to mention Contragate. Bill Moyers, as far as I know, is the only national reporter to put together the obvious clips and directly, publicly demonstrate that both Reagan and Bush broke the law, defied the Constitution, secretly had money raised and channeled from wealthy principalities to corrupt foreign governments (including Iran and Iraq)—and then flatly lied about the whole thing.

"Wonderful...This is one to buy, to read. It echoes in the brain, as your own life unfolds."—*Los Angeles Times*



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Despite her mainstream publishing connections, Kelley enjoys some advantages accruing to the outsider. She need not—unlike, say, Tom Wicker—allude to Reagan as a "great president" who conducted the metaphysical operation of restoring our national pride. Nor need she hide behind the fabled credo of "respect for the office." Such a euphemism appeals to the reporter who likes to feel he is a responsible part of the establishment, basking in reflected glory and even supplying the reflectors. That was the most common approach, say, to Operation Desert Storm—the media as PR officers.

In this sense the pontificators Bill Buckley, George Will and Ted Koppel are high-ranking establishment figures, even in their criticism. It is left to Garry Trudeau, Jules Feiffer and a handful of other politically marginal artists to stake out techniques and points of view from which they can effectively shout, mock and laugh that the Emperors are once more wearing no clothes.

And then we have the inside-outsider Robert Scheer, in *Playboy*, instructing Kelley about Nancy's sexuality, recalling an exclusive interview in Governor Reagan's motel room, with Mrs. R. lolling provocatively on the couch. "Nancy," Scheer tells us, "is a turn-on, with her firm butt and still-good legs." Does Scheer prompt us to wonder how he knows Nancy's "butt" remains firm?

Ronnie was called the great communicator not because of any information he instilled but because he could put on a central casting affability and give a performance of ease and confidence. He was full of strong convictions backed up by gems of wisdom gleaned from the *Reader's Digest*—or from wealthy backers or far right lobbyists or bizarre religious cultists who believed, as he did, in the imminence of Armageddon. He preferred watching old movies to reading briefing papers, and referred to his wartime screen experience as if he had really been in combat, liberated prison camps and experienced personally the ravages of World War II. He believed in the existence of a science called "creationism," which he thought should be taught to schoolchildren. He permitted subordinates to set up secret organizations which contravened U.S. law and policy. He condoned raising secret funds from foreign governments, and accepted a $2 million payment from Japanese industrialists shortly after leaving office. He presided over an unprecedented bloating of corporate debt structure, and initiated fiscal policies which enabled the rich to grow vastly richer at the expense of the non-rich. He was indifferent to civil rights except in Communist nations, and had no qualms about the company of brutal dictators.

None of this was a secret. But the usual form of recognition was an affectionate joke about good old Gipper dozing off at cabinet meetings. The press had a stake in letting themselves be patronized. They crowded around Ron's helicopter like puppy dogs, calling questions into the noise of the propeller. At press conferences they addressed him sonorously as "Mr. President" and usually fed him puffball questions, as he referred to a seating chart to call on them by their first names. They resent Kitty Kelley for the same reason movie manufacturers resent Julia Phillips. These ladies may be flakes and exhibitionists, but they, at least, have no "respect for office"—and certainly no respect for office boys. □

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Frank Roosevelt

QUESTIONS ABOUT MARKET SOCIALISM

David Miller's "A Vision of Market Socialism" (Summer 1991) is a thought-provoking contribution to *Dissent*'s ongoing discussion of this topic. He deserves our appreciation for the way in which he specifies five basic socialist values and then defends his model with reference to these values. Particularly useful are his points (a) that there are *tensions* among the values and (b) that no single model of socialism can express or promote all five values to the same extent. Accordingly, those of us who advocate one or another variant of a socialist market economy must recognize that, in giving priority to such goals as democracy, freedom, efficiency, and consumer satisfaction, we may have to sacrifice to some extent a traditional socialist goal such as "the conscious direction of social activities toward common purposes"—since the achievement of this goal would require consensus and central planning but would reduce the scope for democracy and personal freedom. Similarly, there is a conflict between reliance on competitive markets and traditional socialist conceptions of community. We are faced with difficult choices—and Miller is entirely correct to insist that, in the real world, trade-offs like these are inescapable.

There are numerous other important and helpful points in Miller's article—such as his argument that workers' control is more likely than capitalist enterprise to foster ecologically responsible decision making—and I am in accord with the overall thrust of his project. However, I believe there are several questions that need to be posed regarding the logic, feasibility, and normative power of his model. I hope that raising these issues will be taken as a friendly effort to promote dialogue and enhance progress toward a common goal.

First, Miller's discussion of the *efficiency* of market socialism is incomplete. He focuses on the effectiveness of workers' cooperatives as a way of organizing enterprises in various industries but he does not systematically address the question of how well an economic system made up mainly of workers' cooperatives would be able to allocate resources and achieve macroeconomic objectives such as full employment. He does not mention a problem that has been widely discussed by economists, namely, that workers' cooperatives, because they generally seek to maximize *income per worker*, will tend to employ fewer workers than would comparable capitalist firms. In a recent discussion of the economics of workers' cooperatives, Saul Estrin concludes that a market socialist economy would probably not allocate resources as efficiently as a capitalist economy does.* If so, would it not be wiser to concede the point and, after noting that allocative efficiency is not exactly at the top of the list of socialist values, shift the emphasis of our case for market socialism to its other virtues?

Similarly with *entrepreneurship*. Miller offers a sustained argument to counter the oft-repeated charge that market socialism would be inferior to capitalism because it would not provide sufficient incentives to induce entrepreneurs to introduce innovations in production processes and products. This is an important issue, and I found Miller's discussion of it to be imaginative and helpful. However, his solution to the problem—which offers collective entrepreneurship as a substitute for the capitalist kind—remains in the realm of *speculation*, whereas the proponents of capitalist entrepreneurship have numerous case studies to support their view that individual monetary rewards are an effective way of inducing entrepreneurial behavior. Moreover, Miller's discussion of the issue is mainly focused on the differential impact of individual

* Saul Estrin, "Workers' Co-operatives: Their Merits and Their Limitations," in J. Le Grand and S. Estrin, eds., *Market Socialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 164–192. See esp. p. 179.

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monetary rewards (under capitalism) versus shared rewards (for socialist entrepreneurs). He does not consider other factors such as the possibility that a capitalist environment may be more conducive to entrepreneurship because it provides more scope for—and social approbation of—individual creativity, whereas collective entrepreneurship in a socialist environment may in fact be a more cumbersome and less rewarding activity. If such factors as these (as well as the differences in financial rewards) are indeed operative—and if we assume open borders—we might see potential entrepreneurs emigrating to capitalist countries rather than trying to be socialist entrepreneurs in the way Miller proposes.

Another important issue that Miller takes up is the question of how to provide *capital* (which is not to be owned by individual enterprises or their members) to the workers' cooperatives. The fundamental debate here is over whether the capital-providing mechanism should be in the public sector (and thus democratically accountable through the political process) or whether a market socialist economy would be better off having a set of private banks and ordinary capital markets. Miller adopts a position of neutrality, citing the pros and cons of both options. Although he notes that "private banks might appear to be excluded by the general socialist principle prohibiting private returns from capital," he goes on to say that they would be acceptable if "their shares were owned by cooperatives and public authorities in some proportion." What would justify the receipt of—or the benefits derived from—*unearned* income accruing to individuals as members of cooperatives, he does not say.

The more fundamental issue is the question of what criteria will be used to make investment decisions and thus to allocate capital among the various enterprises and localities. Miller notes that there are "social considerations" as well as commercial factors relevant to investment decisions; but, taking into account such factors as the danger that public banks may be unduly influenced by "political lobbying," he ends up on the fence: "The choice between public and private investment banks is a fine one. . . .[I]t might not make much difference in practice what formal system of ownership was adopted for the investment banks."

I must here register a strong disagreement. As Miller himself notes, a system of private banks will allocate capital exclusively on the basis of the rate of return, in order to maximize the banks' profits. This will produce the result—as it does in capitalist countries—that those firms, industries, and regions that are already operating with healthy profits will get most of the new loans—and, hence, the existing inequalities, regional disparities, and other aspects of uneven development will be exacerbated. It seems to me that part of what it means to be a socialist involves being opposed to this particular tendency of a capitalist economy. Given the impact of investment decisions on the future of a country—affecting everything from the energy sources we rely upon to the movement of the population between urban and rural areas to the pattern of wealth and income distribution—it is incumbent upon socialists to make every effort to devise *public* investment mechanisms that can implement democratically determined social priorities without succumbing to the distortions of bureaucratic authority and inappropriate political influence that have been all too prevalent in the Communist countries.

The final question I would like to pose concerns Miller's use of the term and his understanding of *competition*. A reading of his article leaves the impression that he is excessively enamored with the neoclassical economists' model of a "perfectly competitive" economy in which all firms are relatively small; no one firm can influence the price of anything because prices are determined by supply and demand in the larger market; there is free entry into all industries, hence no monopoly; all "factors of production" are paid the equivalent of their marginal contribution to output; and so on.

Miller's commitment to the neoclassical model is evident in the paragraph in which he argues that virtually the entire economy can be made up of worker-controlled firms employing no more than about five hundred people each. He claims that, in most industries, there are no technical factors that require enterprises to be any larger than five hundred person plants and, in a key passage, goes on to say:

> Of course most industrial corporations incorporate many such plants, but the reasons are financial rather than technological; there may be economic advantages in coordinating a complex production process through organization rather than through market relations between separate units. If that is so, then market socialism may miss out on one kind of economy of scale while simultaneously benefiting from an economic structure that is generally more competitive; that is, there will be a larger number of smaller firms, and less tendency to monopoly or oligopoly.

There are several problems here. First, in what sense is it true that an economic structure made up of small-scale, worker-controlled firms is *more competitive*? My interpretation is that by "more

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competitive" Miller really means more like the neoclassical model of "perfect competition." The problem with this is that such an economy—and the firms in it—may not actually be very competitive in the real world. Miller himself concedes this point near the end of his article when he refers to competition in quite a different way: "A society that . . . implements a form of self-management . . . may find that its products cannot compete internationally with those of other countries where capitalist practices remain unmodified."

The issue at stake here is more than a semantic one. Indeed, the sense in which a socialist market economy is or is not competitive is of crucial importance to a strategy for getting from "here" to "there" and, more important, to our understanding of what we mean by "there." Although I do not have the space to deal with all the relevant issues, among the questions we should be considering are the following:

- Is the neoclassical "perfectly competitive" model, with worker-controlled enterprises substituted for capitalist firms, the best available normative standard for socialists?
- If the small-scale, worker-controlled enterprises that Miller proposes are not actually competitive in a world dominated by transnational corporations, by what means should we attempt to bring about a transition from capitalism to market socialism?
- If we establish a market socialist economy in one country but its products are not competitive in international trade, should we restrict trade and move toward autarky?

With regard to the last question, Miller himself mentions—but then quickly retreats from—the idea of restricting international trade and moving toward autarky. It might be useful to recall the argument of John Maynard Keynes in his 1933 *Yale Review* article, "National Self-Sufficiency," that any country wishing to experiment with its social arrangements will have to cut itself off from the world market. Whether or not there is any merit in Keynes's position today, it seems to me that the autarky option constitutes a more logical conclusion to Miller's argument than the rather discouraging speculations with which he ends his article.

I have focused on my disagreements with Miller, but I would not like to end without again expressing my admiration for his bold presentation of the case for market socialism. At a time when a fundamental rethinking of the socialist idea is so obviously necessary, contributions like his are highly valuable. □

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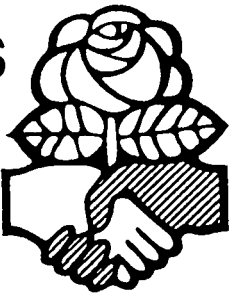

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Harold Meyerson

RENUNCIATIONS

CHAIN REACTION: THE IMPACT OF RACE, RIGHTS, AND TAXES ON AMERICAN POLITICS, by Thomas Byrne Edsall with Mary D. Edsall. W.W. Norton & Company, 1991. 416 pp. $22.95.

In 1984, *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Edsall authored *The New Politics of Inequality*, a groundbreaking work that is still the single best study of Reagan-age politics and that established Edsall as one of the nation's foremost political analysts. The *New Politics* is a combination Cook's Tour/Class Analysis of the forces that led to the Reagan Revolution—the rise of right-wing oil-patch money, the conversion of Congressional Democrats to a more suburban-based and business-funded party, the decline of labor and working-class voting. Much of the material and analysis in *The New Politics* was new, and Edsall presented it with clarity and force.

His new book, which he's written with his wife Mary, is at once more ambitious and less startling. *Chain Reaction* analyzes the conservative ascendancy that began in 1968, chiefly by documenting how the Democrats' commitment to a series of civil and minority rights causes busted up the New Deal coalition and enabled the Republicans to assemble a victorious top-down alliance in presidential politics.

Appearing amid the Bush administration's demagoguery on quotas, and in the early stages of a presidential year sure to feature a Democratic debate on "demarginalizing" the party, *Chain Reaction* will doubtless become the definitive volume of Democratic shock therapy. It's bound to be the strategic bible for those forces around the Democratic Leadership Council and the (centrist) Progressive Policy Institute seeking to have the party renounce many of its social policies of the past quarter-century. Both a salutary work and a deeply problematic one, *Chain Reaction* will be a more influential book than *The New Politics*—which is too bad, since even if the Democrats respond to *Chain Reaction*'s promptings and shuck their more marginal social policies, they will still need to reinvigorate the kind of class politics toward which the earlier book pointed.

Chain Reaction's analysis of the Republican ascendancy consists of four basic points and a somewhat muffled conclusion that is strewn across the book. The first is that over the past quarter century, the Democratic party and American liberalism abandoned a broad economic agenda in favor of the agenda of the Warren and early Burger Courts. "Instead of being seen as advancing the economic well-being of all voters, including white mainstream working and middle class voters," Edsall writes, "liberalism and the Democratic party came to be perceived in key sectors of the electorate as promoting the establishment of new rights and government guarantees for previously marginalized, stigmatized or historically disfranchised groups, often at the expense of traditional constituencies."

Edsall's certainly right that modern liberalism seems crafted to the needs of primarily noneconomic groupings and has lost its class component. Exit polling from 1988 showed that blacks and Jews—America's two most self-conscious minorities—were the nation's most liberal groups; while the rate of liberalism among the poorest Americans exceeded that among the richest by a mere five percent. Other recent polling has shown that to a majority of Americans, liberalism conjures up gay and lesbian rights and the ACLU. National health insurance, by contrast, is a centrist concern.

Secondly, the transformation of liberalism and the Democratic party, Edsall demonstrates, has alienated two constituencies critical to a nationwide Democratic or populist coalition: the working- and middle-class Catholics of Northern cities and working-class Southern whites. In the 1950s, Edsall notes, white Southerners were the nation's third most liberal group on economic matters, after only blacks and Jews (which shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone who remembers the left economic populism of John Rankin, Mississippi's vehemently racist congressman). Southern whites began to turn with the enactment of the civil rights legislation—

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overwhelmingly popular with virtually everyone else—and Northern ethnics with the mid-Sixties rise of inner-city violence, crime and social disorder and with attempts to realize an integrationist vision. Edsall delves into the annals of ward voting to show that Illinois Democratic Senator Paul Douglas's 1966 defeat was brought about by mass defections in those areas of ethnic Chicago where Martin Luther King had led demonstrations for housing integration.

Over subsequent decades, the ethnics' mid-Sixties trickle away from the Democrats turned into a flood as bastions of Democratic working-class support like building trades unions and police and fire departments were ordered first to integrate and then meet ethnic quotas. The rout continued as affirmative action programs became widespread, as Food Stamps and AFDC greatly expanded, and as the Democrats made more of a place in their party structures for blacks and bohemians than they did, say, for Mayor Daley (whose delegation the 1972 McGovern convention chose not to seat).

The rage and resentments of the ethnics and Southerners were further fueled by the fact that the small if steady economic advances they had known shuddered to a halt around 1973 and have not been seen since. Edsall cites a study of disaffected Democrats in suburban Detroit's McComb County (which went 63 percent for Kennedy in 1960 and 67 percent for Reagan in 1984), who blamed blacks and a pro-black government for their status anxieties and career frustrations. John Rankin's contemporary Northern equivalent—vastly more genteel, to be sure—may be Marty Russo, the Democratic congressman from ethnic Chicago who is promoting a Canadian-style health insurance program for the U.S., and who was one of only three Northern Democrats to oppose the Civil Rights Restoration bill.

Edsall's third point is that the great tax and spending revolt of 1978–81, which led to a radical upward redistribution of wealth, took shape when racial backlash augmented the traditional conservative attack on the state. Spiraling inflation and "bracket creep" kicked the revolt into high gear, but the growing perception that government was directed to serving the needs of blacks had prepared the terrain. Indeed, both in California after the passage of Proposition 13 and nationally during the first wave of Reagan cutbacks, the only programs that a majority of voters favored reducing were welfare and public housing.

Fourth, in what is the most analytically and historically valuable part of the book, Edsall demonstrates how the reaction against the rights revolution is the linchpin of modern Republicanism, dating back to the rise of the Goldwater wing of the GOP in the Deep South during the Kennedy administration. Goldwater's core supporters from the North were surprised at this development—the race issue had not figured greatly in their own motivations or political calculus—but for all the conservative presidential strategists who followed them, race was the key issue. As Edsall notes, "race provided conservatism with an essential ingredient in overcoming class differences between segments of the white electorate."

That had been true in the South for generations. Ironically, it was a Southern Democrat, George Wallace, who taught the Republicans how they could take the issue North. Wallace's contribution was to supplant his outmoded "Segregation forever!" battle cry with an attack on a new establishment of "pointy-head bureaucrats." Wallace's "fundamental strategy," Edsall notes, "of creating the specter of a coercive Democratic liberal establishment . . . reached its full dimensions in the Reagan campaign of 1980."

Chain Reaction is not intended simply as a work of history or political science, of course; it is primarily a call to action, to Democratic reassessment and retrenchment. Understandably enough, though, it is a conflicted call to action.

At one level—the one, I suspect, that provided the impetus for the book—Edsall is the indignant social democrat/liberal who sees only calamity ahead if the Republican ascendancy persists. Like *The New Politics, Chain Reaction* contains some stunning data on Reaganism's distributional consequences. Under Reagan, Edsall shows, 18 percent of white households were in the lowest income quintile, which bore the brunt of increased federal taxes, compared to 29 percent of Hispanic households and 36 percent of black households. Welfare cuts affected 2 percent of white households, 10 percent of Hispanic and 15 percent of black.

This Edsall sees liberalism paying for its virtues, its desire for social justice creating just the reverse. "The central tragedy of liberalism," he writes, "is that its commitment to oppose racism, prejudice and oppression . . . has carried within it some of the seeds of its own debilitation."

At another level, *Chain Reaction* shows an almost neocon Edsall who gleefully rummages through the detritus of cultural politics to uncover liberal excesses. Edsall doesn't need to adduce "The Myth of Vaginal Orgasm" to explain the rightward drift of McComb County; he's just feminist-bashing. Likewise, Edsall writes that "Its obligations to institutionalized special interests . . . have locked the party into an alliance with forces of reaction . . .

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conducting largely futile efforts to resist, among other things, the consequences of economic change." This is union-bashing that dare not speak its name. In a volume purporting to advocate a revived bottom-up coalition, this kind of unexamined top-down economics seems curiously out of place. Finally, Edsall never clearly states that the Democrats cannot return to the kind of Roosevelt-era party in which racial justice was simply off the agenda. A sympathetic reader can infer this, but Edsall's polemical purposes have managed to keep such a statement out of the book.

Most of the time, though, Edsall's voice seems that of an alarmed campaign manager, whose efforts are repeatedly thwarted by his candidate's unerring instinct for the wrong side of the wrong issue. (Having myself once managed a campaign on behalf of California Chief Justice Rose Bird, it's a voice I know intimately.) "The Democratic party as it is currently constituted is in danger of losing its stature as a major competitor in national politics," he writes. He knows that changing the way the party is "constituted" is terribly difficult, not only politically but morally. "Liberalism and the Democratic party are heading for a wrenching period as the political process—particularly, the incentive to win the presidency—forces explicit reconsideration of race and rights."

Edsall offers no specific recommendations. Should the Democrats axe affirmative action? Dump gay rights? These are questions he answers only with a question: "At what point does a political party abdicate its responsibility to seek power on behalf of its constituents and at what point—if ever—does its commitment to a substantive moral position supersede its obligation to win?"

To survive and prevail, *Chain Reaction* argues, the Democratic party must abandon much of its core identity of the past 25 years. Events compel the party to adopt a fundamental strategy of renunciation.

But suppose they don't.

There is, for starters, another (if not entirely contradictory) analysis of the Democrats' decline over the past quarter-century: it's not that they have oriented themselves too much around race, but not enough around class. Race and cultural policies certainly pushed Edsall's swing constituencies away from the Democrats, but it's hard to find Democratic economic policies that would have pulled them back. In the Democrats' quarter-century in the wilderness, they have watched passively as taxes have grown more regressive, as American industry closed its doors, as industrial unionism fell apart, as homes and college tuition and health care became unaffordable—the list goes on and on. Remarkable as its embrace of the Warren Court agenda may seem, more remarkable is the party's abandonment of its successful, preexisting agenda.

Somewhere between the Thirties and the Seventies, the representative American liberal activist changed from an organizer into an attorney, and the arena of liberal activism from the legislature to the courts. *Chain Reaction* explains that this happened; there is as yet no satisfactory explanation of why—though there's considerably more of one in Edsall's earlier volume, *The New Politics*, with its emphasis on the changing class composition of Democratic voters and the sources of Democratic funding, than there is in *Chain Reaction*.

Indeed, the passage in which *Chain Reaction* grows most insistent on the appeal of populist class politics doesn't come from Edsall, but from his interview with the late Lee Atwater. "You have for the first time two establishments," Atwater told Edsall. "In the 1980 campaign, we were able to make the establishment, insofar as it is bad, the government. If the people are thinking that the problem is that taxes are too high and government interferes too much, then we are doing our job. But if they get to the point where they say that rich people aren't paying their taxes, that the Republicans are protecting the realtors and so forth, then I think the Democrats are going to be in pretty good shape. So it's which one of those establishments the public sees as a bad guy [that determines whether conservative or liberal egalitarianism is ascendant]."

It's instructive that Atwater and Kevin Phillips, the two preeminent Republican strategists in their period of postwar ascendancy, the period since 1968, both view electoral politics as primarily a question of identifying and isolating an establishment. The Democrats played this game better than the Republicans in the years from 1932 through 1964; the Republicans have played it better in the years since '68. In recent years, many—make that most—Democrats have forgotten how to play it at all, as the antipopulism of party leaders such as Michael Dukakis, such vaunted "reforms" as the change-nothing tax reform of 1986, and the party's failure to notice the current recession all attest. (In those rare recent instances where they do play anti-establishment class politics, Democrats have actually won back ethnic and Southern swing votes. Those were the votes that Richard Gephardt drew in 1988's Iowa primary, that Albert Gore won in the South on Super Tuesday in 1988, and that even Dukakis won over in the final days of the general

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election—in each case, after a sudden, forced candidate conversion to populist rhetoric.)

In fact, the reasons for the Democrats' demise can be drawn from both paleo-Edsall and neo-Edsall: surely, some cultural politics alienated; surely, the absence of economic politics failed to attract. But even if you assume that the political consequences of the Democrats' racial and cultural politics are the chief culprit, does it follow that the Democrats' foremost response should be to renounce those politics? Here, too, there's another strategy.

Consider, for instance, that the Democrats' strongest support among white voters considered by age comes among those over 65. Do we really believe that the oldest white voters are the least racist, that they have less fear of crime and violence than their younger counterparts, that their cultural estrangement from the new Democratic constituencies is less than their children's? Of course not. Consider that the Democrats are weakest among white voters aged 18 to 29: do we think they are the most racist, the least sympathetic to cultural variation?

The answer, of course, is that young white voters experience the government as an agency that taxes them regressively and gives its rewards to someone else—while they struggle to find the bucks to get through college and give up on being able to buy a home. Conversely, the group over 65 are the only white voters who have experienced government as something that works for them—not just now, with Social Security and Medicare, but throughout their lives, beginning with the WPA, and then through the GI bill and federal mortgage assistance. Universal government programs may not make racists any less racist, or affirmative action any less controversial, but they can build a bottom-up Democratic coalition.

In the first pages of *Chain Reaction*, Edsall introduces us to Chicago carpenter Dan Donohue, a representative Democrat-turning-Republican over what he sees as the Democrats' policies of racial preference. But even Donohue's remarks suggest that the problem is partly that he sees the government investing in targeted rather than universal programs: "We are tired of paying for the Chicago Housing Authority," he tells Edsall, "and for public housing and public transportation *that we don't use*." [My italics.] Indeed, it's intriguing to note that some Democratic policies that started life as marginal and have become more universal—I have abortion rights in mind—have been dropped by Republican strategists as issues to use against the Democrats. Finally, there were too many women who wanted access to abortion. The enduring Republican issues exploit the anger against programs targeted to more finite and marginal constituencies—blacks above all.

Besides universal programs, there's another way Democrats can win swing constituencies that doesn't entail repudiation of cultural liberalism, and that's through unionization. While nonunion Southern white males were voting for Reagan over Mondale by a margin of 77 percent to 23 percent in 1984, their unionized counterparts—who comprised only 11 percent of them, to be sure—were voting for Mondale over Reagan by a 50–49 margin. With these figures in mind, it's hard to argue that the Democrats' original sin was entirely their embrace of a minoritarian politics. Might not the AFL-CIO's indifference to organizing during George Meany's long and disastrous stewardship also be a culprit? Can't the Democrats' failure to enact labor law reform during the Carter administration—which would have effectively relegalized organizing—be viewed at least as a minor form of suicide?

Still, no Democratic strategist can assume that reunionization lurks around the corner; and the relegitimation of government through universal programs still requires a Democratic victory in the first place. Save in its somewhat incongruous neoconservative passages, the problem with *Chain Reaction* isn't that its analysis is off-base, but that it is overbalanced toward the need to renounce the particularistic and gives insufficient weight to the party's need to reconstruct class politics and advocate universal programs. It's clear (even if you only read *Chain Reaction* and skip *The New Politics*) that Edsall believes in the latter as well as the former. It's also clear he decided to come in with an unbalanced book because he felt the pressing need was to make the case for renunciation.

The problem, not one of Edsall's making, is that many Democrats are finding it easier, say, to backtrack on affirmative action than to oppose the establishment of worldwide free trade, though the free trade chimera will continue to depress working class America, black, brown, and white. But even in the less than huge number of instances where a strategy of renunciation is morally justifiable and politically possible, that strategy would be imperiled by a failure to advocate universal programs in its stead. The Democrats cannot shift from race to nothing. The only politics the Democrats can profitably play are the politics of class. □

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Christopher Lasch

BEYOND LEFT AND RIGHT

WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS, by E.J. Dionne, Jr. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991. $22.95.

A political reporter by trade (first with the *New York Times*, now with the *Washington Post*), E.J. Dionne has written a book that historians ought to envy. It offers a well-integrated, carefully argued interpretation of a large chunk of our political history—the period since the Second World War, with particular attention to the dissolution of the New Deal coalition and the rise of the New Right. Dionne's treatment is highly selective, of course; he makes no claim to comprehensive coverage. His subject is political ideology; but since he believes that ideological conflicts have dominated American politics in the postwar period, he is obliged to say a great deal, sometimes in passing and sometimes at length, about the major politicians, movements, and presidents of the last forty-five years. His analysis of the Carter presidency is particularly astute—one of the few that explains Carter's downfall without making it impossible to explain how he got elected in the first place.

Dionne's assessments of Goldwater, Nixon, and Reagan are unsparing, even devastating, but not at all dismissive. Dionne takes the Right seriously, neither belittling it as a pathological symptom nor exaggerating its power to dismantle the welfare state, subvert civil liberties, and inaugurate a regime of repression. People on the Left attribute right-wing success to public relations, media bias, the people's willingness to be bamboozled, the persistence of racism and male chauvinism and anti-intellectualism—in short, to the alliance of unscrupulous demagoguery with popular bigotry. In rejecting simplistic explanations of this kind, Dionne is a better historian than many historians.

Dionne's analysis of American politics furnishes an invaluable corrective to the fantasies haunting both the left and the right. The politics of ideology, according to Dionne, has distorted our view of the world and confronted us with a series of false choices—between feminism and the family, social reform and traditional values, racial justice and individual accountability. Ideological rigidity has the effect of obscuring the views Americans have in common, of replacing substantive issues with purely symbolic issues, and of creating a false impression of polarization. It is the prominence of issues that strike most Americans as unreal, Dionne argues, that explains "why Americans hate politics." The issues that give rise to strident professions of faith, on both sides of the ideological divide, seem to have little bearing on the problems most people face in everyday life. Politics has become a matter of ideological gestures, while the real problems remain unsolved. "When Americans say that politics has nothing to do with what really matters, they are largely right."

How did we arrive at such a sorry state of affairs? In order to answer this question, Dionne ranges through the political history of the last forty-five years. He shows how liberals lost public confidence by embracing the "new politics" of cultural liberation. A new breed of liberals emerged from the antiwar movement of the sixties. Deeply suspicious of hard hats who supposedly supported the war without reservation, opposed the civil rights movement, and wanted to put women back into the kitchen, the new liberals championed the rights of minorities, seeing them as the vanguard of a struggle against bourgeois morality. Changes in the nominating procedures of the Democratic party, designed to assure broader participation, served instead to give ideologues and activists a greater voice and enabled them to capture the party in 1972. McGovern's crushing defeat, as Dionne points out, did not put an end to the "new politics." In the congressional elections of 1974, "life-style liberals" strengthened their hold over the party. Liberalism became more and more closely associated with the modernist liberation of the educated classes and the championship of minorities and the poor. As Joseph Duffy observed, as early as 1970, liberals talked as if there were only "two major groups" in America—"the affluent and the welfare poor." The vast middle had dropped out of their vision, enabling the Republicans to pose as the defenders of "middle America."

In 1976, Carter managed to win back many of the working-class Democrats who had deserted the party in 1972. He distanced himself from busing and other liberal causes, criticized the welfare system for discouraging work, and promised relief for middle-income taxpayers. His cultural conservatism, as Dionne points out, had a "populist edge" that made him attractive to working-class and lower-middle-class voters repelled by McGovernism. But his administration was undone not only by the hostage crisis but by rising interest rates and inflation, which drove up taxes. Carter's opposition to government spending, moreover, made it impossible to replace the welfare system with a program of work relief and job training. "Carter's basic problem was that prowork welfare reform is inevitably more expensive

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than the current system." In the end, his policies disappointed blue-collar Democrats and upper-middle-class liberals alike. In 1980, blue-collar voters went for Reagan, while liberals furnished the core of John Anderson's "new politics" constituency. Anderson emphasized the issues that had come to define limousine liberalism—civil rights, abortion rights, women's rights, environmentalism. These are the same issues the continuing sponsorship of which condemns liberal Democrats to permanent exile from the White House.

Not that ordinary Americans are necessarily unsympathetic to the goals in question. But liberals propose to reach these goals by way of policies that threaten working-class neighborhoods, families, and jobs. They expect others to pay the price for their own ideological enthusiasms.

The decline of liberalism by no means guarantees a rosy future for the right. By tracing the conservative revival back to its origins in the 1950s, Dionne shows how unstable the right-wing coalition really is. From the beginning, conservatives were torn between freedom and virtue—between the free market and the cultural traditions thought to produce self-disciplined, self-respecting citizens. When Richard Weaver proclaimed property ownership the "last metaphysical right," he was careful to distinguish personal property from the "abstract property of stocks and bonds," which "actually destroys the connection between man and his substance." Friedrich von Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and Milton Friedman, on the other hand, advanced a free-market ideology that had more in common with nineteenth-century liberalism than with traditional conservatism. Only their hatred of communism held the two wings of the conservative movement together under the leadership of William F. Buckley's *National Review*. Buckley's "fusionist" position managed to embrace all but a few disgruntled isolationists, who criticized the New Right's willingness to give "all-out aid to every dictator . . . who proclaims his unbending 'anti-Communism.' " Still, the attempt to reconcile the virtues of "discipline" and "self-denial," praised by Weaver and Russell Kirk, with the acquisitive ethic promoted by unregulated capitalism was inherently unconvincing. Libertarians and traditionalists had almost nothing in common, not even consistent opposition to the left. On some issues, indeed, libertarians like Murray Rothbard were closer to the New Left than to Weaver and Kirk. They were untroubled by the erosion of civic obligation. They denied that political freedom required the "underpinning of religious and moral sentiment," as M. Stanton Evans disapprovingly observed. They welcomed the abolition of the draft, the decay of authority, and the permissive spirit fostered by capitalism. That capitalism promoted hedonism did not bother them in the least. One of them went so far as to write "in praise of decadence." Traditionalists were not amused.

The tensions and contradictions in the conservative movement were already evident in Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign for the presidency. Freedom was Goldwater's principal theme—the freedom of the unregulated market, that is. But he also defended values quite incompatible with the spirit of aggressive corporate capitalism. "We feel we have lost our way," he said. "There's a virtual despair among the many who look beyond material successes toward the inner meaning of our lives." This kind of language, Dionne points out, was hard to reconcile with a defense of free enterprise as the be-all and end-all of the American dream. "What was this talk, . . . from a firm advocate of the free market, about 'inner meaning'?"

It was only in the seventies, when liberals turned their backs on leaders like Hubert Humphrey and Henry Jackson and made the cause of cultural emancipation completely their own, that the right became a major force in American politics. In 1970, Richard Scammon and Ben Wattenberg warned the Democrats, in *The Real Majority*, that they could win presidential elections only by avoiding "social issues" and stressing economics. This advice fell considerably short of what the Democrats needed to hear—that they should take conservative positions on social issues, radical positions on economic issues. But the point is that the Democrats proceeded to do precisely the opposite, on the whole, of what Scammon and Wattenberg recommended. They downplayed economics and became the party of abortion, affirmative action, busing, and civil liberties—civil liberties so broadly construed that criminals and pornographers seemed to become the chief beneficiaries of the Bill of Rights. "Conservatives were able to destroy the dominant New Deal coalition," Dionne writes, "by using cultural and social issues—race, the family, 'permissiveness,' crime—to split New Deal constituencies." This feat would have been impossible, however, without the wholehearted cooperation of liberals themselves.

As late as 1976, American conservatism was still defined largely by opposition to communism and big government. Four years later, it was firmly identified with "populism"—resistance not only to lavish spending, economic regulation, and bureaucracy (the usual targets of conservative criticism) but to the

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cultural revolution organized by educated, upper-middle-class liberals on behalf of the victims of "bourgeois repression." Liberal attacks on middle-class culture—on "white Western society" in general—enabled the Republicans, traditionally the party of wealth and privilege, to present themselves as defenders of the common people against a "new class" of do-gooders, busybodies, and educated snobs.

Reagan capitalized on popular resentment of liberal elites in routing the Democratic opposition, but his presidency brought to the surface the "contradictions between traditional values and 'casino capitalism,' " as Dionne puts it. Those who deplored secular humanism, permissiveness, and moral decay could take little comfort in policies that encouraged materialistic self-indulgence on a grand scale. Under Reagan, the Protestant virtues were not much in evidence. Indeed, his policies made a "mockery of middle-class virtues," as Wilson Carey McWilliams noted. They also made a mockery of his claim that "America's back, standing tall." Reagan's attempt to cut taxes without reducing spending resulted in a gigantic deficit financed by foreign capitalists. Instead of restoring America's economic preeminence in the world, Reagan's policies facilitated the infiltration of the domestic market by the West Germans and the Japanese. Lee Atwater, Bush's campaign manager in 1988, acknowledged the failure of the conservative revolution, so called, when he predicted that "conservative populists" would return to the Democratic party if Dukakis was allowed to dictate the issues of the campaign. That Bush was able to seize the initiative, successfully picturing Dukakis as a "sixties liberal," does not alter the fact that the conservative coalition remains "inherently unstable," as Dionne puts it. "It unites upper-income groups, whose main interest is in smaller government and lower taxes, and middle- to lower-income groups, who are culturally conservative but still support most of the New Deal and a lot of the Great Society."

The impasse of ideological politics finds its institutional expression in divided control of the national government, which threatens to become permanent. "The lower-income wing of the conservative coalition," according to Dionne, "has tended to vote Republican for president, to express its cultural values, but Democratic for Congress, to protect its economic interests." If he is right, the way out of this impasse is clear: a politics that will unite cultural conservatism and economic radicalism in the same coalition. Only a few years ago, I was denounced in these pages for making the same suggestion. Today there will be less inclination, I trust, to deny that the old ideologies of left and right have outlived their usefulness and that our best hope lies in a politics that defies classification in conventional terms.

"In the current era," Dionne writes, " . . . the concepts of 'left' and 'right' seem less useful than ever." They do not describe what Americans actually believe. Public opinion polls show that large majorities favor the expansion of economic opportunities for women. A Gallup poll conducted in 1987, moreover, found that 66 percent rejected the proposition that "women should return to their traditional role in society." Yet 68 percent, according to the same poll, believed that "too many children are being raised in day-care centers." Almost 90 percent described themselves as having "old-fashioned values about family and marriage." In 1982, Daniel Yankelovich reported a two-thirds majority simultaneously in favor of women's rights and a "return to more traditional standards of family life and parental responsibility."

Public opinion about abortion likewise defies easy classification. When the issue is defined as one of private choice against government interference, prochoice positions win out. But most Americans believe that too many abortions are performed and favor restrictions such as parental consent. The same ambivalence shows up in popular attitudes toward government. Most people agree, in principle, that government is too big and intrusive, but they support Social Security, national health insurance, and full employment. In general, polls suggest that "Americans believe in helping those who fall on hard times, in fostering equal opportunity and equal rights, in providing broad access to education, housing, health care, and child care." At the same time, they believe that "hard work should be rewarded, that people who behave destructively toward others should be punished, that small institutions close to home tend to do better than big institutions run from far away, that private moral choices usually have social consequences." Above all, they believe that families in which mothers and fathers live under the same roof with their children provide the best arrangement for raising the young. This commitment to the "traditional family," Dionne insists, should not be interpreted as opposition to feminism or even to "alternate life-styles." It simply reflects an understanding that "children are usually better off when they live with a mother and a father who have made more than a passing commitment to each other."

As Dionne characterizes them, popular attitudes

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contain more common sense than the rigid ideologies that dominate public debate. They are often ambivalent but not necessarily contradictory or incoherent. Unfortunately, they find no expression in national politics, and it is for this reason, according to Dionne, that Americans take so little interest in politics. The explanations of political apathy and stalemate offered by other commentators emphasize procedural considerations—sound bites, campaign finance, the overwhelming advantages of incumbency in congressional elections. Dionne's emphasis on substance is a tremendous improvement. The problem is really quite simple: the political process no longer represents the opinions and interests of ordinary people.

The solution, of course, is not simple at all. Dionne probably underestimates the difficulties of finding an approach to family issues that is "both pro-family and pro-feminist." It is an admirable goal; but keeping the schools open all day—one of his suggestions—is not much of an answer. What is needed is a restructuring of the workplace designed to make work schedules far more flexible, career patterns less rigid and predictable, and criteria for advancement less destructive to family and community obligations. Such reforms imply interference with the market and a redefinition of success, neither of which will be achieved without a great deal of controversy.

The problems confronting American society (or any other advanced industrial society) can't be understood simply by taking account of "what Americans believe," though that is certainly a step in the right direction. Polls reveal "far more room for agreement" than we might think, as Dionne argues, but they hardly add up to a public philosophy. As Dionne himself admits, the country's ambivalence often shades into schizophrenia. Americans have a "split personality, which by turns emphasize individual liberty and the importance of community."

These are by no means completely irreconcilable values, but neither can they be neatly balanced simply by splitting the difference. As a guide to sound political practice, schizophrenia is not much better than ideological paranoia. A "coherent notion of the common good"—Dionne's concluding plea—will still have to rest on difficult choices, even if they are not the choices dictated by worn-out ideologies. A public philosophy for the twenty-first century will have to give more weight to the community than to the right of private decision. It will have to emphasize responsibilities rather than rights. It will have to find a better expression of the community than the welfare state. It will have to limit the scope of the market and the power of corporations without replacing them with a centralized state bureaucracy.

An abandonment of the old ideologies will not usher in a golden age of agreement. If we can surmount the false polarizations now generated by the politics of gender and race, we may find that the real divisions are still those of class. "Back to basics" could mean a return to class warfare, or at least to a politics in which class became the overriding issue. Much will depend on whether men and women of good will shrink from this prospect, as they usually have in the past. □

Ellen Willis

FEMINISM WITHOUT FREEDOM

FEMINISM WITHOUT ILLUSIONS, by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. University of North Carolina Press, 1991. 348 pp. $24.95.

During the earliest skirmishes between the women's liberation movement and its New Left progenitors, one of the charges that flew our way, along with "man-hater" and "lesbian," was "bourgeois individualist." Ever since, left criticism of the movement has focused on one or another version of the argument that feminism (at least in its present forms) is merely an extension of liberal individualism and that, largely for this reason, it is a movement of, by, and for white upper–middle-class career women. At first this attack was crude and frankly preventive, aimed at heading off the whole idea of feminism as serious radical politics before it got started. Later, as the power of that idea became ineluctable, as leftist women—even those who were hostile or ambivalent to begin with—began to take it for granted as a reference point, the argument was tempered and recast as dissent over the meaning of feminism and its proper direction. But the basic issue remains: whether the demands for independence, personal and sexual freedom, the right to pursue happiness that have set the tone of feminism's second wave are the cutting edge of cultural revolution, or on the contrary socially irresponsible and irrelevant to most women's economic and familial concerns. That there are self-proclaimed feminists and leftists on both sides of this debate is symptomatic of a larger division—the split between cultural radicals and left cultural conservatives that has been widening for years and is now taking on the proportions of a major political realignment.

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Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's presumptuously titled book (haven't we had enough of intellectuals who imagine they have no illusions?) dives into these roiling waters. The author, who describes herself as "temperamentally and culturally conservative" and committed to feminism "despite firm opposition to some of its tendencies that I regard as irrational, irresponsible, and dangerous," rejects the liberal democratic proposition that individuals have inalienable natural rights and therefore the idea that women have an inherent right to self-determination. Insisting that the claims of society are prior to individual rights, and that all such rights are socially derived, she calls on the feminist movement to break with its individualist roots and find a rationale for women's rights in collectively determined values and interests. Nor, in Fox-Genovese's view, may the collectivity in question be women as a group: for her the concept of sisterhood, whether defined as political solidarity in fighting male supremacy or as commonality based on some version of "female values" (she makes no distinction between the two) is itself an extension of individualism that obscures differences of race and class while denying women's stake in a common human culture and the legitimate claims of society as a whole.

Feminism Without Illusions is not a systematic argument but a series of loosely related essays with considerable overlap, held together (often just barely) by a sensibility—characteristic of contemporary left conservatism—that merges two disparate strains of anti-individualist thought. One is a socialist materialism that defines human rights primarily in terms of distributive justice, the other a communitarian, cryptoreligious moralism that laments the decline of traditional forms of social authority, especially the family. Neither philosophy has much use for individual freedom, which is seen mainly as a threat to the social fabric. Both endow human beings with an amoral, insatiable will to power that must be subject to external controls. Both object to the capitalist marketplace on the grounds that it unleashes the individual and undermines social and moral order. Both evince a puritanical suspicion of pleasure, particularly sexuality, that powerful manifestation of the anarchic, imperial will. For the socialist in Fox-Genovese, individualism leads to Hobbes's nightmare war of all against all; for the communitarian, to a disastrous denial of any concept, "however secularized," of original sin. Her contempt for liberty is straightforward: on pornography she declares, "I would ban the more extreme forms without a second thought, and with precious few worries about the public expressions of healthy sexuality that might be banned along with them"; she takes issue with the Supreme Court decision defining flag-burning ("an affront to our collective identity") as free speech; she rejects the idea of an absolute right to abortion, arguing that the question of when life begins must be decided collectively, not left to "individual conscience or convenience."

Despite certain convergences between this brand of illiberalism and that of the anti-pornography movement, the project of assimilating it to feminism is, to say the least, a challenge. Feminism is indeed, as Fox-Genovese puts it (with a disconcerting air of floating a daring new idea), "the daughter of individualism"—not only because of its origins in the demand that the ideals of the enlightenment apply to female as well as male individuals, but because the market opened up alternatives to women's absolute economic dependence on the family. Furthermore, Fox-Genovese and I agree, contemporary feminism has uncovered the profoundly radical implications of the idea that individual rights are innate.

We differ, however, on what this means and how to evaluate it. For Fox-Genovese, the depredations of individualism have been limited by restrictions on who counts as an individual, and the claims of the dispossessed, women especially, are now demolishing those saving limits. As I see it, the problem with liberal individualism in capitalist societies is not its liberating tendencies but its coexistence with, and masking of, systemic domination. Liberal social-contract theory assumes—can make sense only by assuming—an adult, putatively genderless but implicitly male citizen engaging in a public political and economic life, which in turn means taking for granted an apolitical sexual and domestic realm in which patriarchal relations are unquestioned. Capitalist ideology defines the economic rights of the individual not simply as freedom to produce and exchange goods and services or to benefit from the fruits of one's labor but as freedom for some individuals to monopolize economic resources and thereby control the lives of others.

From this perspective, the left-conservative (and right-libertarian) conflation of an unbridled market economy with the expansion of personal freedom comes apart. It is not, for instance, inconsistent—as Fox-Genovese would have it—for feminists to ground their defense of abortion in individual rights while rejecting economic individualism in support of comparable worth; rather, it is contradictory for employers to invoke "individual rights"—their own or those of workers in "male" jobs—to justify the

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economic and sexist domination involved in systematically devaluing "women's work." To be consistently for freedom and against domination does not, as Fox-Genovese claims, destroy the distinction between freedom and license. Rather, it means making that distinction at the point where my exercise of freedom interferes with yours: the true equivalent of unconstrained capitalism would be unlimited freedom to impose one's will through violence.

A genuinely radical libertarianism is not unconcerned with community. On the contrary, it requires communities committed to negotiating social conflicts and deciding on social priorities in ways that maximize freedom and minimize coercion, that allow people the widest possible latitude in meeting their perceived needs while still respecting the rights of others, including the others in their own households. It also, of course, implies equality of power, including the power of dissident individuals and groups to resist coercion by majorities. In short, such a community is democratic—which means that it gets its validation and its aims, which are always provisional, from the individuals who participate in it, not vice versa.

Critics of social-contract theory have justly argued that social life is a given of human existence: each of us is born embedded in and dependent on social relations. Indeed, the very idea of rights implies a society that recognizes and supports them. Still, we experience ourselves, primally, as individuals with urgent impulses and desires—in relation to others, to be sure, but also apart from and in conflict with them; any parent can attest to how early babies begin to struggle, poignantly, for autonomy. Nor is this struggle synonymous with a destructive will to power: on the contrary, in my view, it is the cumulative suppression of basic human needs for freedom and pleasure that has given rise to the sadistic rage at the root of this century's barbarities, from Nazism and Stalinism to the anomic violence of today's inner cities. For those of us who draw that lesson from history, the idea that human beings have inherent rights and freedoms transcending any given form of social organization is indispensable. This ought to be particularly obvious in the case of women, who have been to varying degrees subordinated in all known cultures, whose sexual and reproductive functions—intimate aspects of their being—have always been collectivized. While men of oppressed classes and races may at least have their subjectivity recognized within their own groups, women are everywhere defined as existing in relation to men and children. How are women's rights to "derive from a collectivity" when the very definition of human society has been so closely linked with the definition of women as a resource?

Fox-Genovese makes passing acknowledgment of this problem, but it doesn't deter her from advocating a society that defines the common good as "the good of the whole, with the whole understood to have an existence in some way independent of, or logically anterior to, the individuals who compose it" and that functions as a collective conscience. In practice that means a society based on the repressive, patriarchal norms of Judeo-Christian morality and enforced by traditional institutions, or some form of authoritarian collectivism based on a secular ideology and enforced by the state, or a combination of the two.

The implications for feminism are perhaps most evident in Fox-Genovese's discussion of abortion. She asserts:

> The vast majority of women who seek abortions are still in their teens, unmarried, and poor. They have scant, if any, prospects of providing bare essentials for a child, and the attempt to do so almost invariably destroys their own prospects. . . . The hard truth is that our society is not prepared to provide adequately for children. . . . The argument for abortion as a woman's individual right, by conflating pregnancy and child rearing, confuses sexual and economic issues. . . . Pregnancy itself does not long interfere with a woman's opportunities to live the life she chooses; child rearing frequently does. A woman can, in principle, afford to share her body—and even to give up drugs, alcohol, and tobacco—for nine months without serious consequences. . . .

This argument accepts the entrenched assumption that a woman's reproductive capacity is not an aspect of her selfhood but a social resource; it ignores the pervasive impact of that assumption on women's alienation from their bodies, their sexuality, and their sense of themselves as agents; and it trivializes women's experience of unwanted pregnancy, which often includes intense feelings of bodily and psychic violation as well as the knowledge that every pregnancy has potentially "serious consequences." For that matter, its economism ridiculously oversimplifies the issues involved in child rearing. Melodrama aside (it is simply untrue that the "vast majority" of women who seek abortions are in dire economic straits), Fox-Genovese is clearly suggesting that a good enough welfare state could restrict abortion without violating women's rights. If this is the socialist talking, the

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communitarian surfaces in her endorsement of a collective definition of life, linked to fetal viability: without such a definition, the right to abortion "can logically lead to the right to murder with impunity." Which is to say that the moment women are permitted to determine whether and on what terms they will give birth, Sodom and Gomorrah will ensue.

Fox-Genovese also disapprovingly equates "women's right to liberation from the reproductive consequences of their own sexuality" with "their right to the male model of individualism," suggesting that the desire for sexual freedom is both morally dubious and intrinsically male. (To give her her due, the desire to be out in the world on "honorary male" terms did have a lot to do with the passion of young, childless feminists in the early legal abortion wars—myself included.) In general, one of her more traditionalist objections to individualism is her fear that it leaches out the concreteness of biological difference, defining women as either abstract, genderless atoms or surrogate men. Yet at the same time she rejects sexual difference or female commonality as a basis for feminist politics.

This is not as contradictory as it sounds. Fox-Genovese is positively Gothic in her rendition of "the inescapable conflict between men and women": "As social facts, male strength and female reproductive power pit the sexes against each other in a conflict rendered only more poignant by the attraction that locks mortal adversaries in each other's embrace." It follows that since this conflict cannot be transcended or resolved, either through androgyny or through an unthinkable separatism, there is no point in politicizing it.

I share Fox-Genovese's lack of enthusiasm for notions of solidarity based on women's alleged special qualities or values, as well as her refusal to dismiss the entire corpus of Western culture as monolithically male. (Ironically, this sort of cultural nationalism offers the most plausible framework for a feminism that subordinates invididual rights to collective norms.) Her denial that women have a common political interest is another matter. In arguing against the reductive conception of sisterhood as a bond that transcends race, class, and cultural differences, Fox-Genovese is merely echoing what has been feminist conventional wisdom for a decade or more. No feminist on the left would deny that radical feminists' insistence on gender as the primary political division led to a crippling inability to confront the differences among women; nor that an effective feminist politics must take women's complex, multiple identities into account. But Fox-Genovese goes further: in classic left antifeminist fashion, she dismisses the very idea that women's "special oppression" derives from gender as an individualist "temptation," which functions to shore up capitalism by denying class and race. She sees feminist consciousness raising as a form of middle-class therapy ("The rising self-awareness brought many to confront how much of the early anger, presumably related to the male oppressors, in fact derived from childhood relations with mothers"), political only insofar as it freed women "from the continual replay of familial psychodramas." (For the historical record, rising self-awareness brought at least some of us to confront how much anger, presumably derived from our relations with our mothers, in fact related to our oppression by men.) As for actual feminist successes in opening up new opportunities for women, Fox-Genovese argues that it is mainly middle-class women who are able to take advantage of them, while working-class and poor women have been hurt by the attendant loss of patriarchal protections, especially the male backlash (my word, not hers) against supporting children. (One might ask when poor women, black women in particular, ever enjoyed any patriarchal protections, but never mind.)

At the start of her concluding chapter, the author writes, "However much this book is intended as a feminist critique of individualism, it is bound to strike some—and perhaps many—as a critique of feminism." The implication is that those so struck are stuffy party-liners; feminism is, after all, the most various and contentious of movements. But in truth, little remains of feminism of any stripe by the time Fox-Genovese gets through divesting it of "illusions." While I don't doubt that she believes women ought to get a better deal, she resists any possible means of translating that sentiment into a political challenge to male power and privilege. In a key passage in her introduction, Fox-Genovese makes the familiar economistic argument that feminism is a "symptom" of other social changes, particularly women's increased participation in the labor force—an argument that denies or plays down the role of feminism, as movement or as impulse, in promoting the changes in question. The implicit corollary is that women's equality will also come about as a symptom of economic change. Fox-Genovese never says outright that the woman question will be resolved not by feminism but by socialism; such claims are out of fashion, and for good reason. Yet it seems clear that this is what she means—and that the diffuse quality of her book comes, in part, from the strain of not saying it.

The other major subtext in *Feminism Without*

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Illusions is perhaps best expressed by the following personal anecdote:

> Early in our marriage we enjoyed playing gin rummy, and, as it happened, I frequently won. Now my husband enjoys winning as much as anyone I know. And one day, when I had not just won, but won big, he turned to me with a wicked gleam in his eye and said, "Yes, but you don't have a penis." We had a good laugh.

Evidently Fox-Genovese means this story as an ironic cautionary tale about the tension between equality and difference, the battle of the sexes, and the ways we do and don't transcend it. Myself, I can't help hearing in her husband's joke the intellectual's sublimated equivalent of the truck driver's dick-waving in *Thelma and Louise*. And in Fox-Genovese's appreciative laughter I hear the voice of all social conservatives, saying, in one way or another, settle for sublimation, it's the best you can ever get. If the past decade's defeats tell us anything, it's that no illusion feminism has perpetrated is half so devastating as this one. □

Thomas Bender

A GROUP OF CRITICS

BELOVED COMMUNITY: THE CULTURAL CRITICISM OF RANDOLPH BOURNE, VAN WYCK BROOKS, WALDO FRANK & LEWIS MUMFORD, by Casey Nelson Blake. University of North Carolina Press, 1990. 365 + xvi pp. $34.95 hardcover; $12.95 paper.

Though it lasted only sixteen months, the magazine *Seven Arts* (1916–17) defined an important cultural moment in the United States. Distinctively American but cosmopolitan, modernist in commitment but democratic and constructive in spirit, *Seven Arts* was, in the phrase of Henry May, the "pure distilled essence" of the bohemian intellectuals of the 1910s. *Seven Arts* is probably best remembered as the magazine that published Randolph Bourne's brilliant, stinging critique of John Dewey, his teacher. His attack on Dewey's "pragmatic" support of American participation in World War I resulted in the withdrawal of the magazine's patron, thus ending its career.

Although *Beloved Community* does not make the *Seven Arts* magazine its centerpiece, it could have, for the book is about a mode of cultural criticism first given form in that magazine. Casey Blake's subject, as his subtitle indicates, is "the cultural criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford." The first three wrote for *Seven Arts;* the last, a generation younger but terribly precocious, read the magazine, especially Bourne, and formed himself as an intellectual in its image.

Mumford is no doubt the best remembered of the group. The other three writers, well known in their time, have not worn well, save, perhaps, for Bourne as a sort of cult figure of those who admire his antiwar essays and his articulation of a cosmopolitan American culture. A brilliant writer, Bourne was a leader of the young prewar intellectuals, but his career was prematurely cut off when he died in the influenza epidemic of 1918. Van Wyck Brooks's career falls into two phases. Blake is interested in the first half, when Brooks was a powerful critic of the genteel tradition inherited by his generation. His *America's Coming of Age* (1915) as well as other early essays carried the message, as Lionel Trilling put it, "that ideas should be related to the actual life of a people, that the national existence should be of a kind that permitted ideas to affect it." Waldo Frank is least well remembered, although he does not deserve such obscurity. At its best his criticism (as in *Our America* [1919]) matched that of the other three, though he could drift off into mysticism.

Casey Blake is the first to treat these writers as a group, and he has written sensitive biographical analyses and penetrating criticism. But his book is more than a history of an important movement in American cultural criticism; it is itself a work of cultural criticism. While not uncritical of Bourne, Brooks, Frank, and Mumford, Blake identifies strongly with their cultural critique. Yet I am more impressed by Blake the historian than Blake the critic.

Blake offers a novel perspective on these critics. Beginning with Christopher Lasch's *The New Radicalism in America* (1965), historians have tended to be uncomfortable about the intensely personal roots of the cultural criticism of the intellectuals associated with Bourne. Even those drawn to their work have treated the psychological needs that impelled these intellectuals as at least partially disabling. Blake boldly turns this supposed liability into an asset.

The preoccupation of these writers with "personality" is presented by Blake as a strength. He insists that we ought to take more seriously the constructive, even radical, possibilities inherent in the modernist shift toward heightened awareness of the inner self. Historians have been inclined to interpret the shift from the nineteenth-century concern for

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"character," a sense of moral being defined historically and in public terms, to the twentieth-century obsession with "personality" as a symptom of the emergence of what Philip Reiff has called the "therapeutic" society, a cultural mode tending more toward the quest for material goods in the department store than for moral good in the political sphere. Blake, however, argues that the impulse toward personal fulfillment can fuel radical critique as well as accommodationist consumerism.

Where other recent critics, including myself, have been impressed by the cosmopolitan ideal articulated by Bourne, Blake emphasizes a different aspect of Bourne's thought, exemplified in the following sentence from "Trans-National America" (1916): "All our idealisms must be those of future social goals in which all can participate, the good life of personality lived in the environment of the Beloved Community." In context Bourne is clearly referring to the making of a pluralistic, cosmopolitan America. Yet Blake chooses to emphasize personality and community to the near exclusion of that theme. The last clause ("the Beloved Community"), which in its romantic communitarianism discomfits me, is the focal point of Blake's interest. Blake is right to recognize this part of Bourne, but it is not clear that this rhetoric enhances Bourne's claim as a major critic.

In fact, when the quest for community expresses itself most strongly in these four critics—whether in Frank's dream of mystical union or in Mumford's decentralized cities—one notices a disregard (except in the case of Bourne) of America's pluralist promise and, often, the democratic public. Although Blake would have us believe otherwise, it is not clear from his scrupulously honest narrative that his four critics were ever able to envision a truly heterogeneous public culture. They mainly sought to make America safe for creative people, for intellectuals. Repression of the "full" self always worried them more than class oppression.

The relation of these intellectuals to a democratic public was never clarified in their writings. One of the great shortcomings of Lewis Mumford, for example, is the contrast between his democratic professions and his impoverished conception of democratic practice, between the vitality of his rhetoric of public life and the empty and static quality of the public life he proposed, as it was represented, for example, in the film *The City* (1939).

If Blake the critic sometimes gets carried away by his enthusiasm for a nostalgic vision of community, Blake the historian clarifies our understanding of this critical quartet. His decision to treat them as a group, interweaving their lives and works, illuminates the response of intellectuals to the exhaustion of the bourgeois family and its cultural ideals in fin de siècle America.

Although Blake seeks to portray a linear pattern of growth and clearer conviction in the work of Bourne, Brooks, and Frank during the 1910s, his account rather impresses upon one how young they were and how unstable was their thought. The times gave them no leisure in which to mature, to develop their thought systematically. While the broad outlines of their positions are clear, they never crystallize—and only in part because they were anxious to avoid the trap of "premature crystallization."

Although Blake grounds his account in the disordered family life of the bourgeoisie, the dream of a "beloved community" derived as well, according to him, from the romantic critique of industrialism and from what he calls a "radicalized version of civic republicanism." Blake's introduction of "republicanism" is at once characteristic of recent self-consciously radical historiography—and problematic. The appeal of this tradition, delineated for historians by J.G.A. Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), apparently is in its use as an anticapitalist counter to liberalism. But what is anticapitalist is not always deserving of our faith. While the republican ideal of participation and public spiritedness is appealing, these virtues are closely associated with more troubling tendencies, including a bias toward social homogeneity and an exclusion of economic issues and gender politics from the public realm. In any case, does the republican label fit these critics? Someone as interested in cultural and political diversity as was Bourne is an unlikely republican.

The radicalism of the four critics devoted strikingly little attention to the Marxist and liberal concerns for social justice. Bourne, Brooks, Frank, and Mumford offered moving critiques of industrial *culture* without much advancing understanding of industrial *society*. The development of personality and a loving community may have implied, as Blake insists, a reconstructed society. It may even be true that their resistance to industrial culture constituted a form of political radicalism. But if so, their vision of how to effect a social transformation is exceedingly difficult to locate.

One might argue that the narrowness of their perspective could be excused because of the

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presence of a significant socialist movement. Perhaps the Socialist party and other working-class political movements might have been expected to do the work of social and economic—as opposed to cultural—criticism. As a practical politics, which is not Blake's story, such a claim might be developed. But this argument was never made by the four critics themselves. Insofar as Blake is championing a tradition of radical criticism, such an untheorized division of labor is a serious defect.

If the interrelations of cultural, political, and social democracy are underdeveloped in the work of Blake's group, it is ironic that they were so anxious to attack John Dewey, a critic in whose philosophy cultural, political, and social democracy unambiguously implied each other within a world of diversity. Bourne's brilliant attack on Dewey's support of the war is easy enough to grasp and appreciate. Bourne claimed that Dewey's philosophy lacked poetic imagination and that it left the relation of values to ends unresolved. Dewey never acknowledged the force of Bourne's criticism, but in *Experience and Nature* (1925), *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), and *Art as Experience* (1934), he deepened his thought as if he were incorporating Bourne's perspective into his own. Yet in *The Golden Day* (1926) Mumford repeated Bourne's critique of 1917. To his credit, Blake acknowledges the peculiarity of this relentless—and seemingly uninformed—attack on Dewey. More than that—Blake does not make this point—it shows how narrow was the actual critical range of Mumford, Frank, and Brooks.

Blake stresses their effort to define a cultural politics characterized by antistatism, committed to decentralization and to the nourishment of civil society. Yet in elevating culture over conventional politics, these critics were drawn to consensual and, often, hierarchical forms of collective life. Unlike Dewey (again), they did not imagine a public in which intellectuals and artists were among the diverse and contending voices that might define a democratic public. Always honest and insightful enough to point out the liabilities of his four critics, Blake remarks that "culturalism ran the risk of sacrificing the civic culture of democracy to the authority of a mobilized intelligentsia."

I fear that Blake's celebration of these critics may well lead us back to the nostalgic and moralistic communitarianism of Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart* (1985), a book commended by Blake. Yet perhaps I worry too much, for in conclusion Blake does offer a balanced and wise appraisal of the significance of Bourne, Brooks, Frank, and Mumford:

> Too often, in the criticism of Mumford and the other Young Americans, this generous vision of a democratic culture gave way to a rhetoric of mystical wholeness, prophetic leadership, and organic mutuality that dissolved politics in silent communion and emptied their ideal of community of the voices and aspirations of real people in real communities. But by insisting that the fully realized self needs a sense of place—a distinct cultural location—and that a democratic polity can flourish only when embedded in a rich "human ecology" of symbolic form, the Young American critics made a precious contribution to our understanding of the relationship between politics and culture. □

George Scialabba

NO WORD FOR UTOPIA?

THE CROOKED TIMBER OF HUMANITY: CHAPTERS IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS, by Isaiah Berlin; edited by Henry Hardy. Knopf, 277 pp., $22.00.

Securus iudicat orbis terrarum, says a maxim of Roman law; which means, loosely translated: the *New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement* can't all be wrong. Isaiah Berlin is a certified sage, an object of near-universal veneration. "Few writers and intellectuals command the awe and admiration accorded to Sir Isaiah Berlin, and with good reason," declared the *Economist* recently. "There is, arguably, no more admired thinker in the English-speaking world," began the Boston *Globe*'s review of his latest book, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*. Although he has written, in addition to thirty or forty essays and a great many lectures, symposium contributions, and other occasional pieces, only one short book—*Karl Marx* (1939)—Berlin's career has been a rapid-fire sequence of academic honors: Fellow of two Oxford colleges; Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford; President of Wolfson College, Oxford; President of the British Academy; the Erasmus, Lippincott, Agnelli, and Jerusalem prizes; and a knighthood, presumably for academic distinction.

The Crooked Timber of Humanity is a twilight volume: it revisits longstanding preoccupations and restates long-held positions, not in order to revise or synthesize but to clarify and embellish. As usual, Berlin's essays blend the history of ideas, the philosophy of history, political theory, and moral philosophy; his approach is relaxed and untheoretical (although sometimes almost dismayingly uncluttered with textual references); his prose style is weighty and graceful.

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The unity of Berlin's thought is not far to seek; he has devoted his career to telling a single story. If the master narrative of modernity recounts the gradual progress of enlightenment and emancipation, the alternate, or anti-, narrative describes the costs of that progress: the blindness of enlightenment and the cruelties of emancipation. No sooner was the autonomy of reason secured than the adequacy of reason began to be questioned. Kant's and Hegel's challenges to Enlightenment rationalism are well known; but Berlin has brought into view, more than any other historian, the full vigor and variety of the anti-Enlightenment tradition. In previous books he showed deep similarities among such marginal and apparently disparate figures as Vico, Herder, Sorel, the nineteenth-century Russian Slavophiles, and Tolstoy as a moral and political thinker. The longest and most substantial essay in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* adds Joseph de Maistre to this number, though with due allowance for de Maistre's distorting extremisms.

What these thinkers have in common is epistemological and moral pluralism: a conviction that the aims of scientific method—predictiveness, universal applicability, logical simplicity, ontological parsimony—cannot be imported into the study of psychology, history, or politics. Individuals and cultures are radically diverse, ineffably deep, infinitely complex. Only imaginative identification, a renunciation of the urge to theoretical mastery, and a yielding to the sheer particularity of things can produce genuine understanding.

Even more important than this interpretive pluralism is ethical pluralism. Moral no less than aesthetic values are radically diverse. Both within and among human beings, conflict, or at any rate tension, is inevitable. Compromise is possible, but not perfect harmony. This "banality" (his own characterization) is Berlin's constant, almost obsessive, theme. An astonishingly high proportion of his essays, whatever their subject, employ something like the following formula. Enlightenment political thought is said to rest on three premises: first, that every meaningful, properly formulated question has a single correct answer; second, there exists a reliable method for discovering this answer; third, all these answers must be compatible, since truths cannot contradict one another. It follows from these premises that one (and only one) perfectly rational and harmonious way of life is discoverable. This conclusion is deemed to justify unlimited coercion by those who have attained to this discovery against those who have not. And so the tendency of every utopian movement is totalitarian: when perfectibility is the assumption, coercion must be the result.

Of course Berlin's pluralism has more flesh on its bones than this. In his finest essays—on Vico, Hamann, and Herder in *Against the Current*; on Herzen, Belinsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoy in *Russian Thinkers*; and most recently on de Maistre in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*—he depicts the rebellion against Enlightenment rationalism through marvelously vivid and dramatic intellectual portraits. But the actual arguments, even in his celebrated "Two Concepts of Liberty" and "Historical Inevitability," are thin.

By his own astute and engaging admission, Berlin is not an original thinker. He is, rather, a supremely effective exponent of the conventional moral and political wisdom. This is not entirely, or even in the main, a disparaging judgment. The conventional wisdom is genuine wisdom. Revolutionary, egalitarian, and utopian rhetoric has been put to deplorable uses in the twentieth century; now and for a long time we would do well to be suspicious of it. To have articulated this suspicion comprehensively and, so to speak, genealogically, with large resources of erudition and eloquence, as Berlin has done, is an important service. So is his lifelong admonition that (to quote his approving summary of Montesquieu's position) "durable and beneficial social structures are seldom simple, that large areas of political behavior always remain very complex and obscure, that a radical change of one part of it might easily lead to unpredictable effects in others, and that the end might be worse than the beginning."

This last, however, is a sentence that Michael Harrington or Rosa Luxemburg might have written—it is, at least, a sentiment they would have endorsed. The conventional wisdom had nothing to teach either of them about respect for individual liberty, and they had a great deal of unconventional wisdom to teach Berlin and the civilization that has lionized him. In every society, some truths are convenient and some are not. To those who expound convenient truths (especially with Berlin's incomparable verve) much is given and much forgiven.

Berlin's frequent animadversions on Marx and Marxism are, unfortunately, a contribution to conventional unwisdom. The notion that Marx is responsible for the Gulag is, of course, a terrible simplification. Berlin himself has warned more than once against it. Nonetheless, it's hard to see what other sense to give comments like this:

> [For Hegel and Marx,] a large number of human beings must be sacrificed and annihilated if the ideal is to triumph. . . . The path may lead to a terrestrial paradise, but it is strewn with the corpses of the enemy, for whom no tear must be shed, since right and wrong, good and bad,

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> success and failure, wisdom and folly, are all in the end determined by the objective ends of history, which has condemned half mankind—unhistorical nations, members of obsolete classes, inferior races—to what Proudhon called "liquidation" and Trotsky . . . described as the rubbish heap of history (*The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, p. 198).

Or this:

> Marx—and it is part of his attraction to those of a similar emotional cast—identifies himself exultantly . . . with the great force which in its very destructiveness is creative, and is greeted with bewilderment and horror only by those whose values are hopelessly subjective, who listen to their consciences, their feelings, or to what their nurses and teachers tell them. . . . When history takes her revenge . . . the mean, pathetic, ludicrous, stifling human anthills will be justly pulverized. . . . Whatever is on the side of victorious reason is just and wise; whatever is on the other side . . . is doomed to destruction (*Four Essays on Liberty*, p. 62).

At one remove from Marx himself, "Marxist sociology" teaches:

> It is idle for the progressives to try to save their reactionary brothers from defeat: the doomed men cannot hear them, and their destruction is certain. All men will not be saved: the proletariat, justly intent upon its own salvation, had best ignore the fate of their oppressors; even if they wish to return good for evil, they cannot save their enemies from "liquidation." They are "expendable"—their destruction can be neither averted nor regretted by a rational being, for it is the price that mankind must pay for the progress of reason itself: the road to the gates of Paradise is necessarily strewn with corpses (*The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 178–79).

All this is superb prose; but as an account of Marx's historical materialism, it is tosh. Marx doubted—correctly, as the bloody history of the American labor movement demonstrates—that capitalists would give up without a fight or that they would (even by their own standards) fight fair. That's about all his infamous revolutionary amorality amounted to. To talk of liquidating half mankind or pulverizing human anthills—that is, to assimilate Marxism to Stalinism—is mere mischief.

I do not mean that Berlin tailored his rhetoric to flatter the prejudices of his Establishment audience, or anything of that sort. On the contrary, he seems to me all unselfconscious integrity, incapable of altering an adjective, much less an opinion, for the sake of the Erasmus, Lippincott, Agnelli, and Jerusalem prizes togther. He obviously believes every word he has written about Marx, many of which are just and penetrating. But if Berlin didn't believe and hadn't frequently and eloquently expounded these damaging half-truths about Marx during the central decades of the cold war, I doubt he would have been the object of so much institutional affection and gratitude.

"People are pleased," observes Russell Jacoby ("Isaiah Berlin: With the Current," *Salmagundi* and gratitude, Winter 1982), "to find a man of learning who does not accuse them or their society of unspeakable crimes. . . . Berlin reassures his readers in a prose studded with the great names of Western culture that complexity is inevitable, solutions impossible; the threat is from the utopians and artists who imagine a better world."

The critique of utopia is the nerve of Berlin's writings. Like his critique of Marx, it is surprisingly simplistic for so renowned an evangelist of complexity. Sometimes it is not even minimally informative; Berlin frequently tries to make mere repetition or enumeration do the work of detailed analysis. By and large, his strictures are pronounced rather than proved.

Take this passage from "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West":

> Broadly speaking, western Utopias tend to contain the same elements: a society lives in a state of pure harmony, in which all its members live in peace, love one another, are free from physical danger, from want of any kind, from insecurity, from degrading work, from envy, from frustration, experience no injustice or violence, live in perpetual, even light, in a temperate climate, in the midst of infinitely fruitful, generous nature. The main characteristic of most, perhaps all, Utopias is the fact that they are static. Nothing in them alters, for they have reached perfection: there is no need for novelty or change; no one can wish to alter a condition in which all natural human wishes are fulfilled (*The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, p. 20).

In short, the Garden of Eden minus original sin. But consider what are perhaps the five most influential utopian fictions in English: More's *Utopia*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Wells's *A Modern Utopia*, and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*. No characteristic

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from Berlin's list applies categorically to all five; or, indeed, arguably, to any of them. All members of all these societies are liable to some danger, want, frustration, envy, violence, insecurity, and tedious work, however insignificant compared with present-day levels. They are cooperative, egalitarian, technically advanced commonwealths, not idylls of static perfection. *Pace* Berlin, no "metaphysical" theories of human nature are required in order to accept them (with whatever reservations) as inspiring models or programs, only a lively and discriminating moral imagination.

Similarly, in "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will" Berlin declares that

> thinkers from Bacon to the present have been inspired by the certainty that there must exist a total solution: that in the fullness of time . . . the reign of irrationality, injustice and misery will end; man will be liberated, and will no longer be the plaything of forces beyond his control—savage nature, or the consequences of his own ignorance or folly or vice; that this springtime in human affairs will come once the obstacles, natural and human are overcome, and then at last men will cease to fight each other, unite their powers and cooperate to adapt nature to their needs . . . (*Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 212).

This Berlin regards as an absurdity, a Sorelian "great myth" of perfect harmony through a scientifically-arrived-at "total solution"—the sinister implications of that last phrase are almost certainly intended. To me, on the contrary, it seems an entirely reasonable and humane goal (though patronizingly and tendentiously formulated by Berlin, to be sure)—a goal that implies neither psychological nor intellectual nor moral uniformity, nor any perfect harmony, fortuitous or coerced.

A final example, from the same essay. According to Berlin, the Romantics have done well for humanity by dealing a "fatal blow" to the notion that

> rational organization can bring about the perfect union of such values and counter-values as individual liberty and social equality, spontaneous self-expression and organized, socially directed efficiency, perfect knowledge and perfect happiness, the claims of personal life and the claims of parties, classes, nations, the public interest. If some ends recognized as fully human are at the same time ultimate and mutually incompatible, then the idea of a golden age, a perfect society compounded of a synthesis of all the correct solutions to all the central problems, is shown to be incoherent in principle (*Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 237).

If this passage is purged of exaggeration and caricature—even if one merely removes the words "perfect" and "golden age"—then the incoherence vanishes, or at least requires a good deal more demonstration than Berlin provides, either in this essay or (despite his reputation as *the* theorist of political pluralism) anywhere else.

Would any of those to whom the above beliefs are ascribed—the "many who put their trust in rational and scientific methods designed to effect a fundamental social transformation"—acknowledge them in the form here proferred by Berlin? I doubt it. Again and again—almost without exception, in fact—Berlin trivializes and dismisses utopianism by means of such phrases as "earthly paradise"; "the perfect life"; "the perfect society"; "a perfect and harmonious society, wholly free from conflict or injustice or oppression"; "a static perfection in which human nature is finally and fully realized, and all is still and immutable and eternal." But has any utopian writer, no matter how deluded, ever really promised perfection? Any *influential* utopian writer? *Most* influential utopian writers? Even if the answer to this last question were "Yes" (that is, even if Berlin's central claim about utopianism were true), the important issue raised by the utopian tradition would not be "Is humankind perfectible?" but "How perfectible is it?" How far can we go? And why can't we even make a start?

Notwithstanding his famously varied interests and extraordinary range, Berlin has never found the occasion even to raise, much less come to terms with, these urgent and obvious questions. He has instead devoted himself to addressing continual reminders about the unattainability of perfect harmony to a civilization that cannot rouse itself to legislate a decently progressive income tax or do more than gesture fitfully at homelessness, global hunger, and a score of other evils for which a doubtless imperfect posterity will doubtless curse and despise us. Berlin will not, I'm afraid, win the Scialabba Prize.

He will survive that disappointment; for all his frequent and graceful self-deprecation, he evidently enjoys, along with everyone else's, his own good opinion. Near the end of his splendid essay on Turgenev is a passage of what is unmistakably self-description:

> . . . the small, hesitant, self-critical, not always very brave, band of men who occupy a position somewhere to the left of center, and are morally repelled both by the hard faces to their right and

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the hysteria and mindless violence and demagoguery on their left. Like the men of the [18]40s, for whom Turgenev spoke, they are at once horrified and fascinated. They are shocked by the violent irrationalism of the dervishes on the left, yet they are not prepared to reject wholesale the position of those who claim to represent the young and the disinherited, the indignant champions of the poor and the socially deprived or repressed. This is the notoriously unsatisfactory, at times agonizing, position of the modern heirs of the liberal tradition (*Russian Thinkers*, p. 301).

This is a perfectly honorable position, but it is not, as far as I can see, an agonizing one. It seems, in fact, quite a comfortable one. Turgenev, it is true, was not comfortable. But then, he tried long and hard to find common ground with the "indignant champions of the poor," rather than merely informing them that not much, alas, can be done. Berlin is, of course, in favor of whatever *can* be done; but what in particular that might be, and why not more, never seems to be his immediate concern. "The concrete situation is almost everything," he advises, concluding an essay entitled "The Pursuit of the Ideal." The concrete situation is just what he has rarely said a word about.

A few decades ago Irving Howe wrote: "But if the ideal of socialism is now to be seen as problematic, the problem of socialism remains an abiding ideal. I would say that it is the best problem to which a political intellectual can attach himself." So it was, and still is. And Berlin still hasn't. □

Philip Kasinitz

BITTER JOURNEY

THE PROMISED LAND: THE GREAT BLACK MIGRATION AND HOW IT CHANGED AMERICA, by Nicholas Lemann. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 410 pp. $24.95.

It's probably unfair, but I would like Nicholas Lemann's account of the causes and consequences of the great black migration better if it were not so widely and extravagantly praised. It is, in some ways, a very good book. Well-written and compassionate, *The Promised Land* makes important contributions both as an account of a crucial chapter in recent American history and as a vivid depiction of the horrors faced by ghetto dwellers today. Yet the reception of the book all across the political spectrum and its long stay on the best-seller lists have made it something more. *The Promised Land* now not only contributes to the growing literature on poverty, but may come to define the issue. As such, it must be looked at in a different light, one that reveals not only the book's substantial strengths but also its serious flaws.

Lemann certainly deserves credit for reminding us of the crucial role migration has played in shaping contemporary American race relations. Today the issue of race is so widely associated with the problems of northern cities that the very word "urban" (as in phrases such as "the urban crisis" or even "urban dance music") is often a euphemism for black. Yet as recently as 1940 more than three-fourths of African Americans still lived in the South, half of them in the rural South. The movement of the majority of the black population into the northern cities was one of the most profound sociological shifts in America during this century. And although this phenomenon is hardly as unexamined as Lemann implies—one of the weaknesses of *The Promised Land* is his tendency to ignore most of the existing literature—previous writing on the subject has generally focused on the early years of the migration. Lemann, by contrast, looks at the much larger migrant wave after 1940, when the attraction of the North had already become less important than the economic shifts (principally the mechanization of agriculture) pushing people out of the South.

Lemann presents this history through the life stories of several black Mississippians, all of whom spent their early years in the cotton fields around Clarksdale in the heart of the Delta. Embedding these stories in a rich description of the region, Lemann evokes the often violent world in which black sharecroppers and farmers struggled to make a living. He then follows his subjects to Chicago, the "Promised Land," where their hopes for high paying jobs and racial equality are soon dashed by the

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realities of the ghetto. Lemann documents how, over the course of several decades, the declining industrial economy, overcrowding, misguided public policy, and rising crime devastated many black Chicago neighborhoods. Yet at the same time growing black political power helped give birth to a new black middle class.

This history is well known, yet rarely has it been told in such compelling detail. Lemann is particularly successful in giving clear human faces to those he writes about. By the end of the narrative, his principal informants exemplify the contradictory trends shaping black Chicago in the post civil rights period. One woman endures two decades in the Robert Taylor Homes, one of the most violent of Chicago's massive high rise housing projects and very possibly the worst place to live in America. After losing several of her children to drugs and one to madness and suicide, she returns to Mississippi. During the same period a fellow Clarksdalian gradually works his way up to the civil service ladder and eventually achieves solid middle class status as a housing project manager.

Yet while the narrative style of *The Promised Land* accounts for much of the book's appeal, it is also one of its weaknesses. Although the story Lemann tells has the feel of truth, one is never sure whether or not it is the whole truth. The book lacks any comparative framework; one is often unsure of what Lemann sees as a national trend and what is an idiosyncrasy of Chicago history. As a result, *The Promised Land* is best when at its most journalistic. In addition, while Lemann generally avoids taking specific theoretical stands about the causes of persistent poverty, his work is framed by an implicit bias in favor of cultural rather than structural explanations. He consistently points to the traditions of the southern past rather than the opportunity structure of the northern present to explain the lives of contemporary African Americans.

This becomes most apparent over the issue of "sharecropper dependency," a theme running throughout the early sections of the book. Much of the material in these sections first appeared in 1986 in the *Atlantic*, where Lemann suggested that many of the problems of the ghetto "underclass" were traceable to a culture of dependence initially fostered by the sharecropping system. This notion came under instant attack, not surprisingly, as there is considerable evidence that refutes it. For one thing, studies consistently show that black poverty, rather than being associated with an extension of southern folkways, tends to increase with time in the North. For another, Lemann did not then and does not now offer any real evidence that former sharecroppers were more likely than other blacks to end up in the "underclass." Finally, although it is true that the cultural life of black Chicago is deeply intertwined with the regional culture of Mississippi, many of the problems of Chicago's socially isolated ghetto poor are equally present in cities like New York and Boston, where few Mississippians have moved and where most of the black migrants hail from regions in which sharecropping was far less common.

In the current work Lemann acknowledges some of this evidence. Yet the notion that sharecropper folkways shape an urban "culture of poverty" remains a crucial part of his argument that "black sharecropper society was the equivalent of big city ghetto society today in many ways," including leading the nation in illegitimacy and violent crime. It is also seen as the source of an ethos of "getting over," meaning "running some kind of hustle, especially on white people, in the hopes of coming out ahead in a game you couldn't possibly win by following the rules."

Further, when Lemann does refer to findings that contradict this thesis, he merely acknowledges them. He does not generally make any attempt to adjust his position in light of these findings or, for that matter, to refute work inconsistent with his own. Instead, he simply moves on to make another point, seemingly unaware of any contradiction. The stories he tells are so intriguing that one is initially inclined to forgive these lapses. The result, however, is a work that is long on detail and short on intellectual rigor.

It is, of course, not Lemann's style to stake out theoretical positions. He is far more concerned with description than with theory, and he is understandably frustrated by the elaborate "intellectual pirouetting" that characterizes much of the current debate over the "underclass." He is also right in noting how academic research often obscures the profound moral issues that poverty raises. Yet one also senses in *The Promised Land* a consensus builder's fear of ideology or, for that matter, of complexity. As a result, while the book is persuasive in calling attention to the severity of the problems of poverty, it offers little more than a few hints as to how these problems might be addressed.

In the middle of *The Promised Land* the narrative abruptly shifts to Washington D.C., where the "War on Poverty" is discussed. Here the material is a good deal more familiar: for example, several pages are devoted to documenting the mutual disdain between Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy, something which, at this late date, hardly qualifies as news. The author's flair for detail also seems a bit more

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contrived here: is it really necessary to know how Walter Heller, the head of Kennedy's Council of Economic Advisors, furnished his Minnesota home? More problematic than these issues of style, however, is Lemann's tendency to see government policy as almost entirely the result of the personalities of Washington insiders. Once his focus shifts to Washington, he pays less attention to the influence of the broad societal shifts taking place in the 1960s and concentrates on the ins and outs of a small elite of public officials and policy oriented intellectuals.

Lemann ends his book with the pronouncement that America's festering racial sores can be healed by renewing the nation's sense of moral urgency. This admirable sentiment is unfortunately not accompanied by any notion of how this can be done. By asserting that all we really need is honesty, compassion, and commitment, Lemann ignores the profound difficulties liberals now face over the issue of race (for example, the problems presented by Thomas and Mary Edsall in their recent *Atlantic* cover story). He implicitly rejects William Julius Wilson's notion that the progress of the ghetto poor should be tied to a broadening of social entitlement for all Americans, and he makes no attempt to grapple with the question of how an increasingly suburban white working class can be convinced that racial justice should be part of its agenda. Instead, Lemann advocates a vaguely defined assault on the specific problems of the black poor. That such a program lacks popular support does not bother him. "Racial justice," he writes, "has almost never been a popular or populist cause." It becomes possible, he argues, only when liberals and their black allies are able to "bring a recalcitrant public around to their views."

At first reading, this struck me as merely politically naive. Upon reflection, however, I think that there is something disturbingly elitist about Lemann's apolitical approach to politics. Despite his critique of many aspects of the War on Poverty, one senses a nostalgia for a time when the "best and the brightest," unhindered by divisive ideology or bothersome facts, were ready to roll up their sleeves and get down to the business of remaking America. Yet if the failures, and the successes, of the War on Poverty prove anything, it is that moral certainty is not enough. Confronting the problems of poverty also requires the patience to deal with social and political complexity. In helping to call the nation's attention to one of its profound moral failures, Nicholas Lemann has performed a valuable service. It would be a greater service, however, if his articulateness and passion were matched by the sort of intellectual discipline and political savvy that the struggle for racial justice now requires. □

Brian Morton

DIALECTICS OF BOXING

CRITIQUE OF DIALECTICAL REASON: VOLUME TWO, by Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Quintin Hoare. Verso, 1991. 467 pp. $60.

In the late 1950s, Jean-Paul Sartre decided that it was necessary to rethink his entire philosophy. Writing for twenty hours a day, taking amphetamines to spur himself on, Sartre wrote the two enormous volumes of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. This astonishing second volume, now available in English for the first time, is sure to lead to a reassessment of his place in intellectual history. For it is now clear that, whatever his shortcomings as a philosopher, novelist, and playwright, Sartre was the greatest boxing commentator of all time.

In the first fifty pages of this volume, as a prelude to his study of the dynamics of social conflict, Sartre brilliantly examines the dynamics of conflict in the boxing ring. Rather than quote him out of context, I thought the best way to convey a sense of Sartre's genius was to place his observations in a real-life setting. In the section that follows, I use excerpts from Sartre's discussion of boxing to show how much he might have added to "ABC's Wide World of Sports," if he had been a color commentator alongside Howard Cosell. All of Sartre's remarks are actual quotations.

COSELL: Steamboat Green is already in his corner, waiting for James "the Hitman" Harris to emerge from the dressing room. What's your feeling about tonight's bout, Jean-Paul?

SARTE: Neither of the two men now fighting will go very far. Neither will rise very high, neither will fall very low. These mediocre but solid boxers who know their job will continue indefinitely to fight supporting bouts on evenings when others are playing the star roles. But *even this* qualifies them in terms of the hierarchical ensemble: they represent the first rungs . . . of the ceaseless to-and-fro movement which makes up the world of boxing. And this necessary totalization of their bout, on the basis of all the immediately preceding and immediately following bouts (those already announced by the press), finds its concrete and retotalizing signification in the very place this bout occupies on the program.

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COSELL: Interesting thought, Jean-Paul. And a tremendous roar goes up from the crowd: Hitman Harris has entered the ring! He's waving, he's clowning, he's confident—I've never seen him in better shape! How would you describe the Hitman, Jean-Paul?

SARTRE: A lone exploited individual who from childhood has been unable to solidarize with the workers. . . .Thus the violence which, in every fight, takes hold of him and hurls him against an enemy brother, was in its origin the same violence that moves from the oppressors to the oppressed, then back from the latter to the former, and makes it possible to call the opposition between classes a struggle.

COSELL: Yes indeed, and we're looking forward to quite a struggle tonight, as the bell rings for round one. The boxers circle each other—they both look a little green, a little unready. The Hitman tries a jab, but it misses. We're hearing a few boos from the crowd. Not a very impressive opening round, is it, Jean-Paul?

SARTRE: The bout in which the two beginners are embroiled, each a victim at once of his own blunders and the other's, has a reality all the more striking in that such domination of the laborers by their labor, by producing their future before the eyes of all (they will vegetate at the foot of the ladder or abandon the profession), causes it to be seen and touched as a signification and as a destiny.

COSELL: And there's a tremendous right to the head by the Hitman! Green is staggered! The crowd is on its feet! The crowd is going crazy! They want blood!

SARTRE: However, we cannot deny that, for most spectators, things do not go further. Every fight retotalizes boxing and all other fights. . . . But it does not strike them as necessary to wonder whether these organized rifts in the social fabric are, in themselves, a totalization of all rifts in that same "society." Or, in other words, whether the social ensemble is incarnated with the multiplicity of its conflicts in such a singular temporalization of negative reciprocity. At least it is not necessary for the *aficionados*: but perhaps this is because they are *themselves* the fight in progress.

COSELL: *Very* interesting thought, Jean-Paul. Another staggering right to the head by the Hitman! What a tremendous uppercut! I haven't seen this kind of punching power in years! What do you think, Jean-Paul?

SARTRE: Everything is given in the least punch: from the history of the one who delivers it to the material and collective circumstances of that history; from the general indictment of capitalist society to the singular determination of that indictment by the boxing promoters; from the fundamental violence of the oppressed to the singular and alienating objectification of that violence in and through each of the participants. And if everything were not present and transcended, the singular invention—the unique and concrete reality that is *this* punch, delivered on *this* day, in *this* hall, in front of *this* audience—would not even be possible. The incarnation as such is at once unrealizable, other than as a totalization of everything, and irreducible to the pure abstract unity of what it totalizes.

COSELL: And the referee steps in and stops the fight! Hitman Harris has won a technical knockout! Green is refusing to leave the ring—the disappointment is very clear on his face.

SARTRE: What is more, his destiny is written there, his sad destiny as a boxer and a man . . . he bears traces on his face of the violence of others.

COSELL: We saw a great fight here tonight, and I'm sure all the viewers at home will join me in thanking Jean-Paul Sartre for his very perceptive comments. In the world of philosophy, Jean-Paul Sartre, you are a true heavyweight champion, and I want you to know I mean that very sincerely.

SARTRE: Our first inquiry has allowed us to establish a minimal intelligibility. Every struggle . . . is the incarnation of all others.

* * * *

The only question that remains, after one has read Sartre's discussion of the Sweet Science, is why he frittered away his talent for so many years at other pursuits. It's a question that, frankly, I don't know how to answer. But I do know that Sartre's reputation, once so uncertain, is now secure. The second volume of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* will be read as long as men punch each other in the face.

The book also contains speculations about class struggle, about the rise of Stalinism, about whether history has any meaning, and so on. □

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The Communist Collapse, from back cover

destroy him. During the three days of the coup Yeltsin behaved with courage and intelligence; only later did his unattractive side become glaring.

If Gorbachev deserves very strong criticism, let it also be remembered that the possibility of open, public speech in the Soviet Union is largely the result of a democratization initiated by him and his colleagues. It was the regime of Gorbachev that introduced glasnost, that broke the communist monopoly of power, that acquiesced in the liberation of Eastern Europe, that helped end the cold war, that accepted the legitimacy of multiparty politics.

True, Gorbachev hesitated regarding economic policies, but here one ought to be careful and avoid the glibness (when it isn't just reactionary bile) of those commentators who keep talking about "economic reform" and the "free market." For who really knows which economic changes are needed? Who knows the extent and pace at which they should be introduced? That changes are needed we all recognize, but I can understand Gorbachev's uncertainty about the various "reform plans" of the untested economists in Moscow. Being a political man, he also had to estimate the suffering and upheaval such reforms might entail. Still, it's true that Gorbachev did not show the sure hand with regard to perestroika that he had shown with regard to glasnost. (It's not as if Yeltsin has been especially lucid about economic policy, either.)

The most remarkable of the events following the aborted coup was the rapidity and ease with which the communist apparatus was toppled. This vast, swollen bureaucracy employing some 150,000 people, with its enormous wealth, its buildings and enterprises, its stranglehold over the country's socioeconomic life, its interpenetration of all state agencies—this authoritarian monster was, it appears, already dead, certainly brain dead, even before it was shut down. For decades the absolute ruler of the nation, it could offer no resistance—hardly a peep!—once Yeltsin "suspended" the party and Gorbachev resigned as its general secretary. Where did they all go, those leaden bureaucrats? How could it happen that power slipped out of their hands so quickly? Why were they unable to put up a show of resistance? Historians will be asking such questions, but we may speculate that during the last few decades the party had already lost its confidence, its authority, and its ideological rationale. All that was necessary was to give it a final push.

(A comic aside: Gus Hall, head of the American Communist party, after recommending North Korea as a vacation resort, declared that the Soviet communists were probably organizing "underground clubs"—they used to be called cells—in order to return to power. It's far more likely that the Soviet apparatchiks are, like their colleagues in Poland and Hungary, preparing to make a comfortable transition from yesterday's nomenklatura to tomorrow's capitalist enterprise. Bureaucrats find a way.)

No sooner had the coup failed than a large measure of power shifted from Gorbachev to Yeltsin, from "the center" to the Russian Republic. Behind this shift was not only Yeltsin's admirable role during the days of the coup but the growth of nationalist sentiment. Long held down by the communist dictatorship, the national aspirations of the various Soviet peoples now came into bloom. But let us stop for a moment—we shall return to the topic of nationalism—and consider the two main historical actors. Yes, Gorbachev made grave mistakes, but I have the impression that he has gradually developed more of a democratic personality than has Yeltsin. Neither is exactly a Jefferson, but in Yeltsin one senses the potential of an authoritarian demagogue, which is what he appeared to be shortly after the coup, issuing his "decrees" to ban newspapers and the Communist party. Yeltsin does not inspire much democratic confidence, and it is a good sign that he had to back down from some of his decrees because of criticism from supporters.

In the West Yeltsin has been picked up by right-wing commentators who prefer him to

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Gorbachev. Perhaps with good reason, from their point of view. Gorbachev has continued to speak about shifting Soviet society toward a "socialism, democratic and humane"; he has expressed admiration for "Swedish socialism." Yeltsin has not deigned to speak about such matters, though some of his advisers seem to favor the kind of "shock therapy" in behalf of a capitalist economy that has been applied, with poor results, in Poland.

How significant these differences between the two leaders will be, it is hard to say. The present circumstances do not seem very favorable for the kind of society Gorbachev has said he wants. Probably, the wrenching process of economic transformation will not, in the immediate future, produce a Soviet economy—assuming one survives!—that can be given a clear label. There are likely to be mixed and confusing economic forms and relationships.

While the top of the communist bureaucracy has been rendered helpless, there remain major segments of the nomenklatura, the vast political-economic bureaucracy that dominates industrial enterprises and governmental agencies. In some of the republics, communist bosses have shrewdly placed themselves at the head of nationalist administrations—if you can't beat them, join them. It will be a long time before the sclerotic structure of the nomenklatura can be removed, but that removal is essential no matter in which economic direction the Soviet Union moves.

Probably, there will be no single economic policy; things will vary from republic to republic. Nationalism, authentic in its claims but easily debased into repressive modes, is now very strong, and even if some sort of union is organized, it will be less powerful by far than anything we have seen in the era of communism. Already, made nervous by Yeltsin's bluster, some of the republics have begun to show signs that, despite formal declarations of independence, they may seek mutual protection in a loose union.

One thing is clear: the West must provide help, far more abundant than George Bush has thus far proposed. This winter could be crucial. If there are serious food shortages, the danger could follow in some of the republics of a shift to authoritarian regimes. Aid is not only a humanitarian obligation but also the precondition for establishing the kind of Europe in which there could be major reductions in armaments. It would also be appropriate if the United States, in recognizing insurgent republics, were to speak out in defense of the rights of minorities—a matter on which the record of the once independent Baltic states is by no means spotless.

Our century is approaching its end, and so too what has been probably its most significant, surely its most tragic political experience. Communism evolved all too quickly into Stalinist dictatorship, a totalitarian regime of blood, terror, and ideology. Yet communism was also able to elicit the idealism and self-sacrifice of millions of people who honestly thought it would create a better world. Whole generations were destroyed, vast resources of human energy turned to dust. The communist experience has represented an incalculable waste.

There is a danger that the democratic left, long among the most principled critics of communist dictatorship, will also suffer some of the consequences. In parts of Europe the very word "socialism," identified as it, alas, is with the party's rule, meets with disdain. Ideologues of the right, joyous in refusing discriminations, use the collapse of the communist dictatorship in order to discredit anything that relates to democratic socialism. In that way, too, we are paying the price for Stalinism, one of the two great blights of the century.

Enough for now. You will surely be watching the events of the next few months with the same absorption that we shall, and you may also check out the ways in which these hasty notes become outdated or seem mistaken. No matter; we shall come back to these topics in future issues, again and again. □

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On "Democratic Vistas" and the Gulf War

We received this letter from a writer and political scientist who wished to explain why he was declining to sign the "Democratic Vistas" statement that appears in this issue.—EDS.

EDITORS:

The overpowering, immediate, political and moral fact of this past year has been the war in the Persian Gulf. I cannot join in signing a statement that calls for a renewal of the democratic left by finessing that fact. It is hard to believe that others who opposed the war will not feel the same way. It is simply not enough to assert a dubious common ground, and that in a brief, introductory paragraph, as if to get the embarrassment out of the way, when what we are supposed to share evades the central meaning of the war itself—the human devastation, the retrograde regional political developments, and the great strengthening of an American military presence, materially and culturally, in the Middle East and at home. It is a sad but politically inescapable fact that some people in our tiny, democratic left supported the war and were in harmony with the overwhelming majority of Americans. That makes for enormous difficulties in a left democratic renewal, and I understand your desire to wish away the war, to try to reunite those divided by it. But a small, left magazine has more of a responsibility to keep alive moral principle and historical truth than to try to exert immediate political influence. Those of us who found the war monstrous from the outset, and who refused to separate Bush's response to the invasion of Kuwait from the Reagan/Bush policies that helped generate that invasion (not to mention the longer history of Euro-American imperial interventions in the region) will not be able to put our names to your otherwise admirable statement.

MICHAEL ROGIN
Berkeley, Calif.

More About the War

EDITORS:

Kudos to Brian Morton for his assessment of the Gulf War's impact (*Dissent*, Summer 1991). It is patently absurd to continue referring to Saddam Hussein as if his expulsion from Kuwait were the inevitable international priority of Fall 1990. The fact is, equally destabilizing, illegal, and unjustifiable invasions happen rather frequently—Panama and Grenada are but two examples. Similarly, murderous tyrants are (sadly) not difficult to find—in fact, many are directly or indirectly on U.S. payrolls.

In that context, the invasion of Kuwait was not significantly worse than fairly common world events that elicit neither unanimous U.S. condemnation nor massive American firepower. Hussein's invasion was placed at the center of the international agenda deliberately. It was placed there because the obvious repugnance of the invasion coincided nicely with the needs of an international elite—principally, the United States and its allies.

Part of the project of placing the invasion on the international agenda involved creating an Iraqi enemy that was inhuman. Unfortunately, it seems to be an image *Dissent* writers have internalized marvelously. Michael Walzer finds it "good news" that tens of thousands of Iraqis were annihilated, and Baghdad not quite levelled? And throughout the Gulf War analysis, writers refer to "Saddam"? Would a journal as serious as *Dissent* refer to the former British Prime Minister as "Maggie"? Or write on Soviet economic reforms as instituted by "Mikhail," or even "Mike"? Obviously not. Through what mechanism did your writers become on a first-name basis with Mr. Hussein?

ANDREW J. PERRIN
Brookline, Mass.

To Letter Writers

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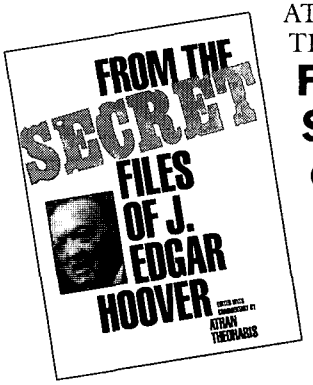

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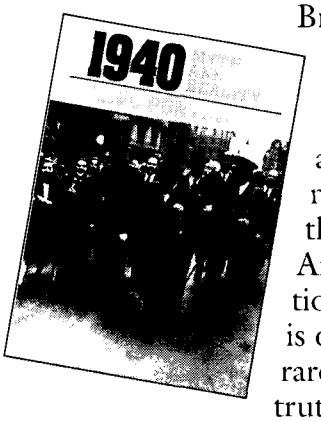

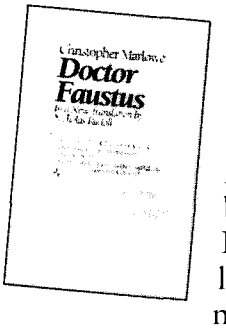

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Irving Howe

THE COMMUNIST COLLAPSE

SEPTEMBER 7, 1991

The remarkable events in the Soviet Union since the failed coup of August 18—remarkable both for the depth and rapidity of change—make it almost reckless to venture a serious comment as we prepare this issue of *Dissent* for the press. But if the risks are great, so is the temptation. And we know you will bear in mind the date at the top of this paragraph.

At first sinister, then farcical, the coup collapsed, and everyone who cares about democracy rejoiced. This was not, as Caspar Weinberger mindlessly said on television, a Stalinist coup; had it been that, it might have succeeded, though at terrible cost in life. No, this was a coup of thick-headed apparatchiks trying to shore up their power and privilege, a coup by the spiritual sons of Brezhnev. In their public appeal, the coup leaders had not one political or ideological word to say, nothing about saving communism or ending it either. They appealed for "order," that is, the preservation of their power and privilege. Why did they miscalculate so badly? Because they failed to see that this was no longer the Russia in which a Khrushchev could be removed by palace maneuvers. This was a Russia in which there were elected officials in Moscow and Leningrad, chosen by the people, and in which public opinion could now play a critical role, especially through the massing of citizens in the streets. Obedience was no longer automatic; fear, no longer paralyzing. The masters could crack the whip, but the serfs did not kneel.

The leaders of the coup failed to recognize that the army was no longer a monolithic whole entirely at their disposal for whatever brutalities they might require. And for their own part, they were a feckless group, evidently well supplied with vodka and lacking the old Stalinist readiness to kill in the "necessary" quantities. They had partly been "contaminated" by the political atmosphere they detested.

After the coup Mikhail Gorbachev's standing and authority declined—and for good reason. When Boris Yeltsin pointed out that the leaders of the coup had all been members of Gorbachev's regime, the charge was damning. And accurate, too. For too long Gorbachev had equivocated, trying to balance reformers against hard-liners, hoping to placate the party, state, KGB, and military apparatchiks by ceding power to them. He was evidently aware of the depth of their opposition to him, but he lacked the ability or desire to confront them outright. So Yeltsin and others were right in saying that Gorbachev was guilty of installing in office the very people who set out to

(Continued on page 604)

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